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DEATH-BED SCENES,

AND

PASTORAL CONVERSATIONS.

BY THE LATE

JOHN WARTON, D.D.

111419

EDITED BY HIS SONS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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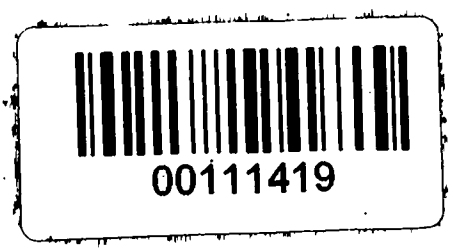
LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.
MDCCCXXVII.

1827

111419

LONDON:
Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES,
Stamford Street.

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aware of his own incompetency, he will sit down inactive and idle.

Having been in the habit then, for several years, of remarking this defect of instruction with regard to practical divinity, and the whole business of a Parish-Priest; and having myself, meanwhile, been thrown perpetually into the most interesting and awful scenes with my own Parishioners; I determined at length to take up my pen, and to commit to paper, whatever having passed under my personal observation, might be most likely to be useful to others of the same profession. I have now for some time been thus engaged; and it is my intention to proceed so long as I am able, or until I have exhausted the subject. Of this, however, there is very little probability; the subject itself being so comprehensive and copious. My children, therefore, will find amongst my papers, when I am taken from them, some voluminous manuscripts headed with this Preface; and they are at liberty to send them to the press, if the opinion of any judicious friend should concur with

their own, that the work deserves publicity. During my life it cannot be permitted to see the light. There is too much in it of my own feelings, and of indirect praise of myself; and also characters and actions are described, and will continue to be so, which would at once be applied to their prototypes, and thus might stir up a flame of animosity amongst us. But, when we are mingled together in the grave, all these things will be forgotten, and the use only will remain to our posterity.

I had no thought originally of doing more than assist my younger brethren of the clerical order, who might be appointed to the management of large Parishes, without time or opportunities to prepare themselves in an adequate manner for so difficult and momentous an undertaking. But, in proceeding with my work, I begin to flatter myself with the notion, that it may possibly both amuse and instruct every description of readers. The scenery must be allowed sometimes to partake of the air of romance, although strictly conformable to truth and

nature: and the way, in which the great doctrines and duties as well as evidences of the Christian religion are set forth and explained, being somewhat novel; at the same time that it is also, I hope, much plainer and less tedious than is too often the case in more regular treatises; many persons may be tempted, upon the recommendation of the Clergy, to peruse the book; and may find, unexpectedly, their fancy pleased, their knowledge increased, and their hearts touched and improved. In fact, the little histories and dialogues herein contained will necessarily embrace all ranks of men, from the highest to the lowest. A populous Parish, like mine, in the neighbourhood of a still more populous town, has a race of inhabitants, fluctuating every day; of almost every possible class; and professing almost every possible sentiment in politics as well as in religion. My constant residence upon the spot, and the daily habits of my life, have brought, and will still bring me into immediate contact with all; and the whole work, when finished voluntarily, or stopped by the hand of Death, will be the

fruit of my whole experience. Upon these grounds, therefore, I may perhaps look forward to more numerous readers, and more extensive utility, than I at first contemplated.

It may be proper to say a word or two upon the style; not to disarm criticism; for the severest criticism will fly harmless over my head, when I am mouldering in the dust; but to inform the reader, that, the matter being the only thing of any essential consequence in such a work as this, the style will be neglected altogether, except so far as relates to perspicuity, which, I hope, will be found throughout. Fine writing is not to be expected at all; and sometimes even the rules of grammar may not be carefully observed. For this work must be written, at all events, in considerable haste, on account of my other numerous employments; and I am morally certain beforehand, that I shall never revise it with any view to the correction or polishing of the style. The first rude sketch will be all that the reader will ever have. However, there

is no doubt but that I shall talk as well upon paper, as either I myself, or the persons conversing with me, do in the real transaction; and every thing beyond this would be an outrage upon nature, and create a reasonable suspicion, that the whole recorded transaction is illusory. Indeed this suspicion will at any rate sometimes arise; because the tone will be now and then above the tone of usual conversation; and because ideas and expressions will be ascribed to particular persons, of which those persons may be thought incapable. In point of fact, I am often in situations in which I am led to preach, rather than to speak; I am compelled, that is, to speak continuously; and then the magnitude of the subject would naturally raise any man's language, under the same circumstances, to a loftier standard. With respect to others, I shall always preserve their ideas, and sometimes their very words, when there is any thing remarkable in them. But I have not hitherto been studious about it; and especially in the conversations related to happen between myself and people of low

rank, I have discarded almost all their vulgarisms; and also I have put their ideas into better shape and form than they would have done for themselves. For I did not consider this to be a matter of any essential concern. Their meaning, and not their actual expressions, is all that is absolutely necessary to be known. In general, however, I trust, there will be enough of nature remaining to keep up the interest of a real conversation.

One thing more, and I have done. This work being designed, if God spare my life long enough, to embrace every topic of importance to a Parish-priest, whether spiritual or temporal; for the sake of greater conciseness and unity of subject, I have brought together, and shall continue to do so, into a single conversation with a single person, what may have actually occurred in more conversations and with more persons than one. This information will perhaps destroy a part of the interest that might be taken in some particular characters; because it will be always a matter of doubt how much

of what is recorded may really belong to them; but the truth, nevertheless, should be told.

And now, reader, farewel! When this comes into thy hands, I shall be beyond thy censures, or thy praise.

PREFACE

BY

THE EDITORS.

THE reader will have seen already, in the Author's own Preface, what were his views and intentions in the composition of the following work. He has now paid the last debt to Nature, and the task of ushering these Dialogues into the world has devolved upon his children. They were not new to us. We remember well with what delight we used to hear him read them in our earliest years. Every book was instantly put aside, and every amusement relinquished, and every ear opened to listen to him, when he announced the joyful news that he had a fresh history prepared for us; and, as we grew older, he permitted us to

read over by ourselves some of the more difficult Dialogues, which at first were above our comprehension and strength. We trust that we shall not be deceived, by our partiality towards a beloved Father, in thinking that they may prove to others, what they did to us, a store-house of the knowledge and practice of divine things.

His injunction to consult a judicious friend, as to the propriety of publishing these pieces, we have not obeyed; because we were aware, that he himself, long before his decease, had shewn several of them to many judicious persons, who were unanimous in their approbation of what they saw, and lamented his resolution of withholding them during his life-time from the public eye. Of such alone does the present Volume consist. Another will soon follow, if the wise and the good are pleased with this.

What he says in his Preface, with respect to the nature of the composition itself, has been verified. It never received his finishing hand. There are no interlineations

even, or alterations of single words, which we do not remember from the beginning; and we ourselves have not altered a syllable. Usefulness, not literary fame, was his sole object.

The names of his Parish, and of the adjoining Town, it is proper, at present, for obvious reasons, to conceal. His own name we have not concealed, because it is so common.

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DEATH-BED SCENES.

CHAPTER I.

MR. WARING,—INFIDELITY.

As I was presiding one night in the select Vestry, I observed Mrs. Waring, amongst many others, applying for Parochial relief. Her husband's sickness was the plea; and as we all knew that he was now grown old, and had seen better days, her request was granted without any opposition or difficulty whatever; and without putting any questions to her, which might have wounded her feelings under the circumstances of her distress. Five shillings however were all that were given at that time out of the rate for the poor; and I therefore determined to visit the sick man the following morning: to ascertain by enquiry upon the spot what was his real condition; to assist him, if necessary, out of my private charity funds; and more especially to discharge my spiritual functions for the good of his soul.

Indeed I had no doubt, that this was the help, of which he stood most in need. At

Church I had never seen him during the whole course of my incumbency. Common fame reported him to be an Infidel, or even an Atheist. His habits had been to live in the Alehouse amongst the lowest company, whom he harangued against the Government and against Christianity; and being much superior to those with whom he associated, and having also no small fluency of talking, he convinced and corrupted many of his hearers. In the mean time, having a little smattering of law, he pretended to give advice upon legal matters, and earned a penny now and then by setting his neighbours together by the ears. If letters or petitions were wanted, he was the man to write them for what he could get. He measured land also; and thus by these various methods, picking up a scanty subsistence, and enjoying continued health, without the burden of a family, he had dragged on to the age of threescore years and ten; and, as far as appeared, never once troubled himself with the thoughts of another world which was to come hereafter and to last for ever.

To myself, without knowing me personally, he was decidedly hostile; not only because I was of the species of those, who wore black coats, and devoured the substance of the people, in the shape of fees, and tithes, and Easter-offerings; but also because he thought me too much

disposed to meddle in the secular affairs of the Parish; to stop the current of his business; and to cut off the sources of his gain. In his cups therefore, as I was informed, he never ceased to abuse the Parson; and sometimes I was assailed by anonymous letters, which were suspected to come from his malicious pen.

Such was the person, whom I proposed to visit, under the favourable circumstances of poverty and sickness, in the hope that I might take advantage of them, and catch him with guile for his everlasting benefit. His house was at the distance of one mile and a half from mine; but upon enquiry I found that he had been compelled to quit it; that all his best furniture had been seized and sold to satisfy the demands of the Landlord; and that he himself, unable to walk on account of his infirmities, had been carried out in a great chair to an obscure lodging in the neighbourhood. All this betokened considerable distress, which was ordained, no doubt, by the good providence of God, to create serious reflection upon the past, and to awaken salutary ideas of futurity. Having received this information, my hopes were increased, that I might be a successful, although a humble instrument in God's hands, for the accomplishment of his gracious purposes of love and mercy.

In the cottage where he had taken up his abode there was a poor family living on the ground-floor; he himself and his wife occupying a single chamber above. Mrs. Waring, having been called down to me below, immediately conducted me up to her husband. He was sitting in the great chair by the side of a small fire. His face, which I saw first, was red and bloated, and his eyes inflamed. His feet, legs, and thighs, were so much swelled, that the heels of his shoes were down, and the knees of his breeches unbuttoned. His body too was of an enormous size, both because he was of a corpulent habit, and in consequence of the dropsy, under which he now manifestly laboured. His waistcoat was open to avoid pressure. On his head he wore a red night-cap. Close by him was a table covered with the various drugs and fomentations which his disease required. The chamber was crowded with the wreck of his property; an old bed without curtains; some broken chairs; pots, kettles, jugs, and sundry other wares; all the worse for use.

The best chair that could be found was appropriated to me; which Mrs. Waring first carefully dusted, and then placed in the most vacant spot. In the mean time she had already introduced me by name, but he did not seem to comprehend who I was; so I said, "I have been told, Sir, that you are not very fond of Parsons;

and I presume therefore you did not expect that a Parson would come to see you; no, not even the Parson of the Parish. But here I am; not deterred by general report; and my intention and desire is to do you all the good that may lie in my power."

"Oh!" he replied, "it is Dr. Warton, is it? I beg your pardon, Sir; I did not know you. Pray, sit down, Sir. I fear, Sir, you have got a wrong opinion of my character, for want of being better acquainted with me. I have a great many enemies in the Parish, and they have not scrupled to slander me to you."

"Well, well," I said, "let us talk and think no more of *that*; at all events we will be friends now, if you will. And you may be perfectly sure, that, in thus visiting you, I can have no private interest of my own in view. Your welfare is my sole object."

To this he assented, and thanked me for my kindness towards him.

Having thus begun with tolerably good omens, I proceeded to enquire about his sickness, expressing my fears that it was both painful and dangerous. In answer he was very communicative; and it appeared that his disorder was distressing in the extreme; a vast mass of water collecting perpetually, and discharging itself through every pore of his body; and

his respiration being at times so much impeded, that he had scarcely breath enough to tell me his own story. He had been at the nearest hospital, in an early stage of his complaint, when it seemed to be within the reach of art; but had unwisely returned home, before the proper system was tried, because he was deprived of many little things which he considered essential to his comfort. Since this the disorder had increased rapidly; yet he would not admit any idea of danger. In fact he was manifestly afraid to die. I put him in mind of his advanced age, and of the usually terrible effects of dropsy, which in his case were too evident even to myself. Still he was most reluctant to entertain a thought of death; and he proposed to me to obtain admission for him into another hospital at a greater distance, but where the medical attendants, as he flattered himself, were men of greater skill. I promised to do this, and named a day in the following week for his departure.

This being settled, I next asked him, as delicately as I could, what was the state of his pecuniary matters; insinuating gently, that I thought it possible, from what I had heard, and from what I now saw, he might want a little assistance, which I should be able and happy to give. On this point he was very reserved, and

would not at all acknowledge his difficulties. Of course he was ignorant that I knew of his application to the parish; and I thought it might be very detrimental to the success of my other objects, if I then mentioned it to him; so I turned it off, by saying that I would talk that matter over with his wife, when I went away. I did so at the door, stating my surprise also that he should endeavour to conceal his circumstances from me. "Ah! sir," she said, "pride, pride, is the cause. He has too high a stomach to confess his poverty; and yet, without the relief which I had last night from the officers, we should have been in some danger of starving." I gave her what was necessary for the present, promising to add to it hereafter; and I thought with myself, that, possibly, his prejudices against me, not yet sufficiently softened down, having led him to consider me his enemy, he was unwilling to furnish me with that sort of triumph, which an enemy might have enjoyed in witnessing his destitute condition. Afterwards, when he knew me better, he had no false shame, or other difficulty about it; but received my offers readily and gratefully.

However, I was now to come to the most important subject, without being in possession of this great advantage; and I said, "Your worldly affairs, I fear, Sir, are in a very unprosperous

state; and your body is certainly afflicted with a dreadful disease. What is there in your case to bear up your spirits under such an accumulation of calamity? Your mind, I hope, is not diseased, as well as your body."—"My mind," he replied, rather sternly, as disliking to be questioned, and yet by no means with the tone of a man really tranquil at heart, "my mind is quite at ease, Sir;" and immediately his whole countenance and restless air belied him.

I saw it; but I said, "I wish indeed it were so; provided your tranquillity were founded on solid grounds. To be called out of this world into eternity with an uneasy conscience is most terrible; but it is equally unsafe to depart with false delusive hopes. May I be permitted therefore to ask you, (as I am sure I ask only for your own good, and not out of an idle curiosity, or with any foolish desire of disputation, under such awful circumstances,) what those grounds are on which you rely?"—"I will tell you plainly," he answered; "if I die, of which, however, I do not see any present danger, I shall either be nothing at all, or I shall not be miserable. My conscience does not accuse me of any crime."

"It seems, then," I said, "that you think it possible that death may be followed by an entire annihilation; but also, on the other hand, think-

ing it possible likewise that there may be a future state, which will be a state of retribution, you have made due preparation for this latter alternative." To this he answered, without hesitation, "I do not pretend to have made any other preparation, than by doing justice always to my neighbours."

"Alas! alas! Sir," I replied, "does not the experience of us all agree in this with Scripture, 'that there is not one just man upon earth, who doeth good and sinneth not?'" He took up the word Scripture hastily, and said, "I have no objection, Sir, to talk with you; but with what you call Scripture I have nothing to do. I put no faith in it. We do not want it. Let a man do his duty, and he has nothing to fear." This he spoke with a most decided air, and collecting all his breath to utter the sentiment. His vehemence indeed exhausted him; and he was compelled to pause before he could finish his sentence. It was too evident that he wished Christianity to be false.

I interposed with coolness; "but you will admit, I suppose, Sir, the morality of the Gospel at least; and therefore must consent to be tried by it, as the rule of your actions."—"I allow," he said, "the morality of the Gospel to be excellent. But what is that to me?"

"It concerns you in this manner," I replied:

"Every man must be tried according to the best rule with which he is acquainted. If the morals of the Gospel be the best that we know, which you seem to grant, we must be tried by those morals. You would not have a man, I presume, who knows a superior law, to be tried afterwards by an inferior one? Put the divine origin of the law for the present quite out of the question; and yet you see, that if your conscience tells you that one law exceeds another in perfection, it tells you at the same time that you must obey the better law, and that you will be judged by it."

He was staggered and alarmed, lest he should have been surprised at once into some conclusion which he might abhor; but I did not wish to profit by his temporary confusion, and so endeavour to push the argument further than it would reasonably go. I continued therefore in this manner:—"You tell me that your conscience accuses you of no crime; and that you have always done justice to your neighbour. But how has your conscience been enlightened? What notions have you formed of crimes, of justice, of your neighbour? He who would be most enlightened on these subjects must study the Gospel; and he who would discharge all his duties with propriety to God and man, must make the Gospel his model. This cannot be well denied. Have you therefore done this, which you

are bound to do by natural reason? And if you have tried to do it, do you not perceive instantly your own deficiencies? When you compare your life with the perfect, holy, sublime law of the Gospel, do you not see and acknowledge immediately, how far, how astonishingly far, you have come short of the glory of God? If I were to scrutinize your actions from your youth upwards, could you lay your hand upon your heart and say, all these I have faithfully performed? Has the fear of God been constantly before your eyes? Have you loved him with all the faculties of your heart and mind; and prayed to him for his blessings; and thanked him for every mercy, even when he afflicted you? What has been your conduct to your parents? Did you never wilfully disobey them, or create them any pain? How have you served your king and country? Have you never misrepresented his government and actions, so as to render others dissatisfied with them, and thus to become discontented subjects? Have you never spoken evil of dignities; which the Gospel, consulting the peace and happiness of mankind, strictly forbids? Have you extended your ideas of neighbourhood as the Gospel directs you, so as to embrace within the compass of it countryman and stranger, friend and enemy; and especially every child of sorrow? And then, have

you been active in performing all the duties that spring from these wide relations? Have you loved your very enemies? Or have you indulged the sinful passions of hatred, envy, malice, towards them? Have you ever taken vengeance into your own hands, and not left it to God? Lastly, have you never violated any of the pure laws of temperance, sobriety, and chastity; neither polluting yourself by sensual vices, nor ruining others by the act or by the example, from your youth up until now?"

Thus I ran through, as rapidly as possible, the whole summary of the moral duties; not suffering him to interrupt me, which he attempted again and again where he felt his conscience clear as to any particular charge; but intending to overwhelm his arrogant assumption of self-sufficiency, by the very multiplicity and variety of the subjects for self-examination which I poured out upon him all together in a mass. And then I summed up the matter in a few words, saying, "Is there now a single man in the world so little acquainted with himself, as to think, that when he stands face to face before the great Judge, he might venture to plead, that he is guiltless in all these respects; that he has perfectly corresponded to the designs of Providence in making him; and that he is entitled to the infinite rewards of a future state? On the

contrary, would not the very best of men, who are always the most humble, cry out 'we are but dust and ashes; we will shut our mouths before God, or only ask for pardon?'"

I was myself visibly affected by my own arguments, and by the earnestness with which I had spoken; but the sick man was little moved, outwardly at least; and at all events he shewed no disposition to concede any thing, but a determination to resist to the last extremity. For he said, "if I am deficient in any thing, I owe it to my nature. God is the author of every man's nature—God implanted in us all our appetites and passions; and, therefore, if we follow the bent of them, he has no reason to be angry, and consequently will not punish us."

"You put yourself then," I replied, "upon the same level with the brute beast, and forget that you have a rational part of your nature, which the brute beast has not, and which raises you above him. And reason is so manifestly superior to every other part of your nature, that you must see at once, that it is not only fit, but intended by Providence, to govern the rest; that no injury may arise to the man himself, or to the community; and that the Creator may be glorified by the proper use of that pre-eminence which he has bestowed. If, therefore, we follow the bent of our appetites and passions, and

suffer them to domineer over our reason instead of being regulated by it, we have not done our duty; we have not acted correspondently to the capacities of our whole nature; we have dishonoured our Maker; we deserve his wrath, and must expect to be punished—Is not this so?"

"Suppose it were," he answered; "may we not be sorry for what has been done amiss; and correct our errors, if there be any; and amend our lives, if they require amendment; and will not this satisfy God, and avert his anger? Your own Gospel allows the efficacy of repentance, and recommends it."

"It does indeed," I said; "but only upon one condition; which condition implies that you embrace the Gospel as true, and believe and trust in it. Do this, and then repentance will be acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

"I cannot do it," was his answer—"Nature teaches repentance; and that is sufficient. I hold by nature."

"A bad support, it is to be feared," I said, "for any of us in our present circumstances. For what is to become of all the past? Will sorrow for it undo it? Will even the most complete change and reformation of life for the future undo the past? And if you are in the right way now, it is no more than what you ought to have been always; and cannot therefore excuse

you for the time in which you went wrong. The God of nature requires a perfect obedience to his laws in every period of your existence. You cannot make a bargain with him to be vicious in one period, and virtuous in another. It is plain, therefore, that even a sincere repentance can supply no solid ground of peace and security, without God's authority to that effect; and such an authority cannot be had without a revelation from heaven. And whose repentance was ever so sincere and complete as not to need a second repentance? In fact, is not the whole life of the generality of mankind an alternation of sin and repentance, repentance and sin; until death overtakes them at last?"

He could not deny it; but still he persisted in saying, that there were so many objections against Christianity, that he could not admit it, even with any advantage which it might offer to him. Upon this I rose up, and took my departure; not being able to spare more time for conversation at present; but I besought him, as he valued eternity, to examine himself well, and to prepare all his objections against my next call, which should be in a few days. He promised that he would do so, but with a very ill grace; and it was clear, that, whilst he could not pretend but that his opinions were shaken, and that he was absolutely beaten out of some of the common

holds of infidelity, it had wrought no joy, but sorrow in his heart.

At my next visit I found him sitting on the bed-side. He was alarmingly worse; the other parts of his dress were the same as before; but he was without a coat; the water had made such inroads upon every part of his body, that it did not seem possible for him to bear up against it much longer. His eyes were still more inflamed, yet glassy and dim. To my first questions about his present state of disease, he gave in answer a most piteous account of himself; no appetite, no rest, no power of breathing. All idea of the more distant hospital was quite abandoned. To convey him there alive appeared to be absolutely impossible; yet he flattered himself, that he might rally sufficiently to go to the nearer hospital where he had been before. He was evidently more than ever afraid to die, whilst the last thread was about to snap asunder, and to plunge him into eternity.

Anxious for his eternal welfare, I now said, "It is my painful duty to tell you, Sir, that your life is in imminent danger—God only knows how short the remnant of it may be! The most ignorant person must see that your disorder is advancing with rapid strides, and your doctors declare that nothing can be done

for your relief by the power of medicine. In some cases it would not be so painful to me to behold the approach of death; but in your case it is beyond measure painful, because I perceive that you have cast away the only staff upon which you might have supported yourself with firmness against all its terrors. But is it indeed true, Sir, that you have cast away this staff? Was not our last conversation sufficient, imperfect as it was, to shew you, that there was nothing secure but in Revelation? To take up the matter as we began; is it not undeniable, that we are all so defective, as to stand in need of a Saviour? And if we are humble enough to feel this, can any doctrine be so worthy of acceptation, so consolatory, so cheering, as that which teaches us that there is such a Saviour, and that he is the Son of God himself? What are your objections, Sir, to this doctrine? You engaged to put them together, and to bring them forward for my consideration on the present occasion."

It chilled me with horror to behold the sick man preparing himself to utter his cavils against the glad tidings of mercy; for his countenance betrayed the intentions of his heart. His head gray with age; his body sinking under the force of a deadly disease: his feet on the very verge of the grave; he commended not his spirit into

the hands of that mighty Being who gave it; he prayed not that it might be presented to Him cleansed and purified by the blood of the immaculate Lamb; he paused only to rally his failing breath, that he might expend even the last particle of it, as it should seem, in depreciating, in reviling, in overturning, the Gospel with the more malicious spite and vehemence. One might have expected the thunder to roll over our heads, and the bolt of fire to strike and consume the blaspheming tongue. But God forbears; and shall man be impatient? I suppressed my rising indignation; and combining his broken and disjointed sentences, I proceeded, as calmly as I could, and as far as seemed necessary to refute them.

But first I said, "I perceive, Sir, (and I perceive it with deep unaffected sorrow) what wretched books have been your study; you have been learning only in the ignorant and impious school of Paine and Carlile; you have drank down their poison, without trying or searching for the antidote.—God forgive both *them* and *you!* One indeed is gone to his everlasting account; his destiny is fixed; and I pray not for him.—The other, in prison, atones for the offended laws of his country and his God; I pray for *him*, and I pray for *you;* that it may please infinite Goodness to prolong your exist-

ence, and to mitigate your sufferings, that you may have both time and power, to make your peace with God, through Christ, before you die."

I was naturally raised above the tone of conversation; and I was willing to think that he was somewhat awe-struck by the solemnity and the devotion of my appeal to Heaven for him. However I continued; "the greater part of your objections are the most trite and hackneyed imaginable; they have been advanced by every caviller or reviler, and they have been answered and refuted by every Christian writer, who has condescended to notice them. Some of them, which are mere blasphemies and not arguments, I shall now pass by in total silence; others also I shall not trouble myself to reply to formally, because I am convinced that you are not swayed by them yourself; the remainder, which have a faint shadow of plausibility about them, I will attack and demolish. I speak confidently; but at the same time, I entreat that when you are not satisfied, you will interpose, and say so.

"One of your objections is, that the Gospel cannot be from God, because it is so recent, and not universal. If it be of such vast importance to mankind, why was it not revealed sooner, and why not to all?—All have alike souls to be saved, and therefore, all are alike concerned.—Is this the force of your objection?" He assented.

"Now tell me then," I said, "whether God be the creator of the world?" "I allow it," was his answer. "Did he create it in some definite period of time, or from all eternity?" I asked. He confessed, from what he had seen of men and of the world itself in his various and extensive travels, that it could not be eternal. "Suppose then," I said, "a person should object that the world was not created by God, because it was of comparatively so late an origin; you see there would be no truth in the objection. And although God intended in creating a new world to communicate happiness to his creatures, might he not have had wise reasons for creating it no earlier, whether we can discover those reasons or not? Must he not indeed, as he is infinitely wise, have had the wisest reasons for doing what he did at the time he did it?"

The sick man could not deny it. "Apply then," I said, "the same reasoning to the case of the Christian revelation; and why should we draw a different conclusion? In fact, it is not analogous to the rest of the dealings of Providence, to communicate any particular gift, although it may have an evident tendency to increase the happiness of mankind, so early as we might think most suitable to the divine goodness; but in the case of Christianity men were actually not prepared for the reception of it in any earlier

period. It could not have been understood at the time; it could not have been proved to after ages. God however has graciously made the benefits of it applicable to all ages, as well antecedent as subsequent to the delivery of it. In the plans of infinite wisdom and goodness the Lamb was slain from the foundations of the world; and the atonement for sin, which was made by his blood, has extended to every man, who acted according to his natural light, and trusted in God. Meanwhile, preparation was made for the actual introduction of the Gospel; by setting apart the Jews for the worship of the one true God; by committing to their care and study numerous promises and prophecies relating to that Gospel; and by disposing and ordering the affairs of other nations in such a manner as to make them facilitate and concur in the establishment of it. In short, Sir, it would require a volume fully to explain this matter, and to give the glory which is due to its great Author; but this simple outline is quite enough to open any man's eyes to view the subject in its proper light, and to induce him to confess, that a mere general objection against the Gospel on the ground of the lateness of the promulgation of it, is both weak and untenable."

Mr. Waring indeed was not so candid as to make this confession; but by his silence he admitted

that he had nothing to say to the contrary; and I therefore went on, "The Gospel, you object, has not been preached to all mankind—But could it have been preached to all mankind at once?" He allowed, that it required time and opportunity to do it, if it were to be done by men. "God," I said, "certainly seems to have left it to be done by men, and without any supernatural aid. If men therefore are negligent, or lukewarm about it, he will charge it to their account. However, it is manifest, that Christianity has a tendency to increase, which is not the case with any other religion. In your various travels, have you ever visited any country, however remote or uncivilized, in which there were not Missionaries established to introduce the Gospel?" He confessed that he had not, so far as his inquiries extended. "The Gospel, therefore," I thus went on, "is not stationary, and men are trying to spread it; whether rapidly or slowly, it matters not for the argument. I believe from the prophecies, that hereafter it will be offered and made known to the whole world; and if some thousands of years were to elapse before that event took place, such a period, however large in our estimation, might be nothing in comparison with the duration of time. A thousand years in the sight of God are but as one day. In the meanwhile, all the nations to which the Gospel is not preached,

are in no worse situation, than all the world before the first preaching of it; and many at this present moment seem quite unfit for it; and must first be disposed for the reception of it, through the good providence of God, by their intercourse with Christian nations, and by the introduction of arts and civility amongst them. Your objection therefore has no weight in it whatever."

By this time, I had discovered, that I was never to expect from Mr. Waring an ingenuous confession, that he was in the wrong. His manner was, when he had nothing more at hand upon any point under discussion, immediately to pass on to another; and I was compelled to follow him. Yet I hoped that a considerable effect must ultimately and almost imperceptibly be produced upon his mind, when he observed, which he could not fail to do, that all his arguments were capable of a ready answer; that consequently, there was not *that* weight in them, which he originally supposed; and that in point of fact they were all beaten to the ground, and he himself had nothing to say in their defence.

On the present occasion he recurred to his mass of cavils, which he had heaped up before, and hastily reiterated his belief, that the New Testament was written three hundred years after the time when the events related are pretended to have taken place; and consequently that there

was no sufficient ground for trust in such a book. Here a wide field was opened for discussion and explanation; and it seemed a hopeless matter, not only to bring my answer within moderate limits, but also to induce him to give credit to my assertions; for part of my answer could not, in the nature of things, be more than assertion merely.

However, I began with asking, why he conceived the New Testament to have been written so recently. "Oh! Sir," he replied at once, and positively, "it is a well-known fact.—It has been affirmed again and again, and I have not heard it once contradicted." "That may easily be," I said, "if you read only the books on one side of the question. And now I see, by your case, that the Infidel writers are not so unskilful, as I took them to be. I could not imagine why they should venture, so often as they do, to assert the most decided and barefaced falsehoods; but I now see, that they are right in presuming, that many of their readers will give them implicit credit, and not trouble themselves to inquire whether their assertions are true or false. I am sorry to perceive, Sir, that you have acted in this manner.—But tell me, have you not as good reason to believe *me*, as to believe Paine, or Carlile, or any other of the same stamp? They have an interest, or think they have, in deceiving mankind. Have I any interest in deceiving *you*; whom I look upon as a dying man?"

"I do not see that you have," he answered,—"Well, then, I assert the contrary;" I said, "I assert that the Gospel was written very soon after the events recorded in it.—Will you believe *me*, or them?" "As you tell me," he replied, "that I have been wrong hitherto in believing without examination persons whom, however, I thought credible; I should like to hear what reasons you have for your assertion." "By all means," I rejoined, "You shall have my reasons; but still you must give me credit for the truth of much of what I shall advance; unless God should spare your life, and enable you to search for yourself, and thus to verify my facts. Indeed, to do it thoroughly, you should be acquainted with the Greek language, in which the New Testament was originally written; and you should devote no little labour to the perusal and study of large and voluminous works in that and other languages. But if you are content to put so much trust in *me*, as one man does in another, in the common transactions of the world, where there can be no probable cause for deceit; I could mention enough to set your mind at ease upon this question in a few minutes." "Well, well, Sir," he said; "be as short as you please; and I will give you credit for honesty."

"What more then could you expect," I enquired, "to prove, that any book was written

at any particular time, than that other authors, writing upon subjects connected with it, at subsequent periods, beginning from that very time, had mentioned the book, or extracted passages from it?" "To be sure," he confessed, "if that were the case with respect to the New Testament, it would go a great way towards ascertaining the age of it." "*That* is precisely the case;" I said. "There exists a series of writers, from the age immediately following that of the appearance of Jesus Christ, and the preaching of his Apostles, down to the time when you assert that the New Testament first appeared; which writers clearly refer to the New Testament, as a book then in being, or to some one or other of the Gospels or Epistles, which constitute that book; and they quote more or less from it, as it suited their purpose; so that no doubt can reasonably remain about its identity. A learned man has taken the pains to go through all those writers; to point out the particular age of each; and actually to produce the very quotations themselves which they made from the Scriptures. I could tell you *his* name, and *their* names, if it were of any use to do it. If these things be so then, can any person, but the most determined and hardened sceptic, require more evidence?"

Without yielding, my antagonist immediately

put the question rather triumphantly, "But have any Heathen Writers spoken of this book? I should wish to know *that*. The testimony of enemies would be more convincing than the testimony of friends." "Yes," I replied eagerly. "But would enemies continue to be enemies, if they were well acquainted with the origin and history of the Gospel? Would they not immediately become friends, and then give their testimony as friends? This was in fact the case with many. They were educated in Paganism, and prejudiced against Christianity; but having been induced by its extraordinary effects to enquire into its evidences, and to study the sacred writings, they were convinced; they were converted; they wrote in its defence; they sacrificed their lives in its cause. There were however some writers, not Christians, who do not indeed mention the New Testament, which was either impossible on account of their age, or not to be expected on account of their opinions, but who record important circumstances relating to Christianity which are striking evidences of its truth. And it might be also sometimes that the silence of a particular author would be a better proof than almost any thing he could have said; but it would take up too much time to set this matter in a full clear light. The writers however to whom I allude are eminent; Sueto-

nius, Tacitus, Juvenal, Pliny, and Josephus. In short it is not to be doubted but that the New Testament was written as soon as might be expected after the events which it records, some parts earlier, some parts later, as the several writers thought it expedient; and it is manifest by a thousand circumstances, that these writers, who were perfectly acquainted with the main facts of the case, could neither have been deceived themselves, nor have had any wish to deceive others. But if their accounts be true, Christianity is true. The question is settled at once."

I paused; he answered after a little thought, and with somewhat diminished acrimony; "Yes, yes, I grant it, if the accounts be true, whenever written; but who can bring himself to believe such accounts? Miracles, for instance; and such miracles! Can any mortal, not entirely bereft of reason, believe the miracle of the Devils and the swine?"

"We will see," I said. "But you object to all miracles?" "I do," was his reply. "Why?" I enquired. "Does God, the Almighty, want power to perform a miracle?" "No; I will not assert *that*;" he answered. "But, as I observe all things proceeding now-a-days, in their regular course, according to natural causes, I feel convinced that it has been always so; and that

God never altered that course, and will never alter it, for the sake of performing a miracle."

"But suppose," I said, "that God should wish to send a message to mankind; how would the Messenger be known to come from *him*, and with *his* authority? When Kings or States send Ambassadors to each other, the Ambassadors verify their commission by undeniable instruments or documents, sealed with the arms of those Kings or States; and these they call their credentials. Now what credentials must God give to *his* Ambassadors to obtain reception for them, and to awaken due attention to his message? What so simple, what so convincing, as a portion of his own power, exceeding the power of man? The credentials indeed must be something miraculous. Nothing conformable to the established laws of nature could possibly attest the extraordinary presence of God. If the messenger came surrounded with the utmost worldly pomp and grandeur; if he spake as never man spake, with the most persuasive and commanding eloquence; if he lived such a life as to exemplify all the noblest and most difficult moral virtues; it would not prove incontestably that God was with him. No! Divine power is the only direct and irrefragable evidence of a divine message; so that in this case you see miracles are agreeable to reason, and by no means contrary to it."

He was silent; and I was fearful, lest, to evade my argument, he should have denied the possibility or probability of any revelation whatever; which would have led to an interminable discussion; but he pursued a different course, and after a while, collecting himself to speak, he said, "Dr. Warton, I have been in many parts of the world; and, it is true, wherever I was, I saw that some religion or other had got hold of the affections of the people. But, in general, these religions were so absurd and foolish, that their falsehood appeared at once. Yet there were none of them which did not pretend to have their miracles. But these miracles were certainly all impostures; and therefore I fell into the conclusion that no miracles were true; which is the safest conclusion to abide by after all."

"Your conclusion was a very hasty one," I replied, "and contrary to all just reasoning, and far from being safe. You should rather have argued, that, as religion was natural to mankind; (for you saw it every where) and as mankind were equally disposed to believe in miracles; (for you met with no religion which did not boast of its miracles) so the probability would be, that some religion might be true, and some miracles attesting that religion true also. From whence you should have gone on to try the Christian religion and its miracles more especi-

ally, as being received in your own country, and involving questions of inconceivable moment, by the proper tests for the ascertainment of their truth or falsehood. Miracles, it is plain, are agreeable to the common sense of mankind; and you have allowed already that they are not impossible, it follows therefore that you ought to examine what testimony there is in their favour, when so great an interest is at stake, and when they are brought forward to prove the truth of a religion which sets life or death before you."

He had nothing to say to all this; and I did not think it wise to press him with questions, to his own confusion; which might have increased his obstinacy; so I went on thus. "The miracles indeed of Pagan Nations, and the modern miracles of the Papists are for the most part confuted by their own inherent absurdities, or by the want of a sufficient cause for the interference of the Almighty; but the Christian miracles, wrought for the purpose of introducing Christianity, and proving it to be from God, had the worthiest cause, and were generally in their own nature noble instances of goodness and mercy as well as of power. What think you of healing the sick, of feeding the hungry, of making the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the blind to see, the dead to rise? And all this by a word, or a touch?

Have you not here two stamps of divinity impressed upon those miracles, power and goodness?"

He could not deny it, but he interposed, that this was not the character of them all. "Perhaps not," I said; "but it is the character of so large a portion of them, as naturally to dispose us in favour of the rest. And what are the rest? the blasting of the fig-tree, the finding of the tribute-money in the fish's mouth, the walking upon the sea, the subduing of the storm, when the sovereign Author of nature, with that voice which all nature hears and obeys, said to the winds and waves, 'Peace! be still! and immediately there was a great calm?' Is there any thing absurd in these miracles to discredit them at once? Were they a mere ostentation of power? Or were they not performed most aptly and seasonably, and all but one so as to strike the disciples with additional awe of their Master, and thereby to increase their faith in him?"

"Yes! Sir," he replied; "it may be so with respect to those which you have selected; but you say nothing of the miracle of the Devils and the swine, to which I objected from the first; and which you cannot explain, and therefore appear to me to evade—Look to that, Sir!" he continued somewhat triumphantly. "*That* is

the point, upon which I wait for information." "You shall have it immediately," I answered. "Only I would have you take notice, that if I were unable to explain that miracle so fully and clearly as I have explained the others, it would not help your argument. Is it reasonable, that a single difficulty, or many difficulties, should destroy at once the effect of every thing else, which is so perfectly plain and simple?"

He would not say that it was; but he was sure, that where there were difficulties, there would always be doubts; and as to possession by Devils, he thought the whole story incredible. "Do you believe," I asked, "that there are such beings as evil spirits?" "I am rather inclined to think that there are not," was his answer. "Are you aware," I asked again, "that all nations, in all times, as far as we can know, have believed in the existence of supernatural Beings both good and bad?" "I am aware of it," he replied, "and indeed I myself observed in my travels, that the religion of some nations was chiefly the result of their fear of bad spirits." "The belief then of the existence of Beings of superior power to men, and inclined to be mischievous to men, being universal, is natural to the human mind; is it not?" I enquired. He granted that it was. "Well then," I continued, "*that* is a presumption at least that there really are

such Beings; and I, who believe the fact to be so, believe also, that one way, in which the idea became so prevalent as to appear natural, is by tradition from the first ages of the world; and I am sure that the account given of those Beings in the Scriptures is a most consistent account, and the only rational one to be found any where; namely, that they were made originally by the great Creator of the same rank with the Angels themselves, and gifted with the same excellent endowments, and put into possession of the same bliss and glory; that, being free to stand or fall, they fell by voluntary transgression from this their first estate; that, since their fall they have been permitted by Providence to tempt mankind to sin for the trial and illustration of human faith and virtue; and that ultimately, together with incorrigible wicked men, who deny the Lord that bought them, they will be cast into a lake of unextinguishable fire." He shuddered at the latter part of my account; but said nothing. I therefore proceeded.

"But to come to the miracle. I believe that in the first age of the Gospel these Devils were permitted to torment the bodies as well as to tempt the passions and appetites of men; one purpose of which was, to shew, what perhaps could not have been shewn otherwise, that Jesus Christ who cast them out, had a power superior

to their's; and thus to raise the faith of the true Christian to a full and perfect confidence that the kingdom of darkness would finally be overthrown by the same power, and the kingdom of righteousness established upon its ruins for ever. However, there might have been then, as there are now, persons who thought that the sick people, afflicted by the Devil, as we say, upon Scripture authority, were not really so; but that they laboured under imaginary disorders of the mind, which they themselves, in the paroxysms of their madness, interpreted in that manner. Now, I ask you, is it possible, do you think, for irrational animals to be troubled with diseases of the imagination?" He allowed that it was not possible. "It would perhaps then," I continued, "be no bad method of shewing that these afflictions, which we call possessions by Devils, were not disorders of the imagination, if it were seen that irrational animals were also affected by them." He was aware of the drift of my reasoning, and therefore, as he could not controvert it after his former concession, he remained silent, and left me to draw the conclusion, that, besides other reasons for sending the Devils into the swine, this might have been one, that it proved the exercise of a real power by those Beings which was subject to the power of Christ. This visible conquest over Satan, was,

in fact, the beginning to bruise the Serpent's head, and an earnest of his future complete destruction, according to the earliest prophecy delivered in Paradise for the consolation of our first parents, and the confirming of the faith of their whole posterity.

Here I thought it advisable to close the conversation for the present. It was wonderful indeed that the sick man could have supported his part in it so long. In body however he was certainly not worse than when we began; in mind there was a sensible alteration for the better; and I tacitly besought God, that he would give me the time, and also enable me, to enlighten and convince him still further, that he might die in the true and stedfast faith of Christ. I refrained from asking him how far I had already succeeded. He was not yet ripe for confessions. He would perhaps have denied that any change had taken place in his opinions; but upon the whole it was sufficiently apparent, and I contented myself with marking it in silence. I now took my leave with a promise that I would be with him on the following day, which he seemed to receive with pleasure, and which he acknowledged with thanks.

I visited him according to my engagement, and was surprised to find a man, whom the day

before I supposed to be dying, now seated in his chair as at the first, and breathing with much more freedom. In fact the water had been astonishingly diminished; and in consequence he had obtained some comfortable rest in the night, and was now enjoying this temporary ease. But there was no reason to think that it could be more than temporary; and therefore in congratulating him upon the pause of his disorder, I still kept in view the certainty that it must terminate fatally. "God," I said, "has been gracious to you, and has spared you another day for the momentous work in which you are employed. Whilst the day lasts, let us be diligent in the use of it; for the night cometh, when no man can work. Yesterday when I entered your chamber, your life seemed to hang upon a single thread, and I expected to see it snap asunder. The same danger may return, you know not how soon; God grant that you may be well prepared to meet it! Shall I kneel down therefore, and thank God for his present mercy, and beg his future help, in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, whom he has appointed to be the only Mediator between men and himself?"

This proposition I made to try him, and, that I might not contend in the dark with respect to his actual sentiments. For he shewed no disposition to give me any positive information about

himself expressly by words; I could only judge by deeds and casual circumstances; nor had I seen Mrs. Waring this morning, so as to get any information from her on this interesting point. I was not a little grieved, therefore, when, instead of accepting my offer to pray for him, he resumed his cavils, by saying, "that he could never digest the doctrine of a Mediator between God and men; and *that* Mediator the Son of God himself; and *him* too crucified, dead, and buried. There is something, he asserted, so strange, so incredible, so contradictory to reason, in the whole scheme and idea of it, that even undoubted miracles could never prove it."

Alas! alas! thought I; then must I buckle on my armour afresh, to encounter a new series of objections; and waste, perhaps irrecoverably, and in fruitless disputation, the precious hours that should have been spent in earnest prayer for grace and pardon. However, I could only follow where *he* led me; and at least it was satisfactory to observe, that he spoke no longer with the same sneering sarcastic tone of voice, or with the same apparent malice of heart, as when he first heaped upon me the whole mass of his crudities. His present objection was then put in a form which I should be shocked to record; now it was expressed with moderation. I did not therefore permit myself to despair; but, on

the contrary, pleased and encouraged myself with the hope that another day might, by God's blessing, produce a still more remarkable change.

I said therefore, "Suppose you had a favour to ask of the king's chief minister, upon whom however you had no claim whatever; and suppose also, that you happened to be acquainted with a person of inferior rank, but high in influence with that minister; would you apply directly to the great man yourself, or through the person who was the common friend of both?"—"I should apply," he answered, "through the common friend."—"He would be your mediator then," said I, "would he not?"—"He certainly would," was his reply. "And is not this," I continued, "the common practice of mankind, where they who have favours to grant are far above them, and out of their reach, as it were, to endeavour to prevail upon some other person or persons to mediate for them; that is, to go between the parties which are at a distance, and to approximate them to each other, and thus to accomplish the wished-for object?" He allowed that it was. "And more especially," I added, "if you had offended the superior man by your conduct, and had reason to think that he would punish you, instead of favouring you; would you venture to approach him under such cir-

cumstances, and boldly ask him to do you some great kindness?"—"I would not" he said.—"But if a friend of your's," thus I went on, "should voluntarily undertake to go to the great man for you, and should bid you to have good hope of success, in spite of the unpromising nature of your case, because that he himself would be your Advocate and Mediator, and that the great man never refused him any thing; should you not be overpowered with joy? Should you not accept so unexpected and advantageous an offer with the utmost gratitude?" —"Undoubtedly, I ought to do so," was his answer. "Well then," I summed up my argument, "this is pretty much the case between God and men. The parties are at an immense distance. One lies under the displeasure of the other, and yet looks up to that other for inestimable benefits. Glad therefore ought we to be, supremely glad, that there is another person at hand, willing to undertake and able to effect a reconciliation between them. This, then, is the Christian scheme; according, you see, with the common reason of mankind."

My adversary was silent, as heretofore, when the argument appeared to be against his positions; but his hostility was manifestly relaxed, and he no longer seemed to think that he had lost any thing; when his assertions were over-

turned. I therefore proceeded, "Now, if this intermediate person were of such a description as to be a natural connecting link between the parties, would he not be admirably adapted to the office? If, for instance, he were perfectly acquainted with all the circumstances of both, by his own experience too, would not *that* be a vast advantage?" He granted that it would. "Well then," I said, "could any one know the two parties better than *he*, who has the nature of both?"—"Probably not," he replied. "Here again, then," I rejoined, "you have the Christian scheme of a Mediator, who is both God and man, consistent, as you perceive, with the deductions of your best reason."—"Yes," said he; "but was this God crucified? Did he die? Was he buried? Is not all this incredible?"—"It would indeed be incredible," I answered, "that God, simply as God, should suffer crucifixion and death. But you must recollect, that Christ, being God by nature, became man, in order that, as man, he might be capable of being put to death. In his divine nature he could not die; in his human he might: and it is easy to understand, that the death of such a person, although he died only as man, yet having the divine nature also, must have been of extraordinary value, and have drawn mighty consequences after it; and these, we affirm, are no less than

the reconciliation to God the Father of a whole world lost in trespasses and sins."

"We are surrounded with difficulties at every step," said the sick man. "Precisely as we might expect," I replied, interrupting him. "If God should reveal any thing to us, would it be likely to be something which we knew already?" He allowed that it would not. "Or any thing that we could certainly discover by a due use of our own reason?" I enquired again. He was obliged to confess that we might naturally expect the things revealed to be beyond our reason. "Why then," I said, "should we stumble at difficulties? In fact, if there were none, we could hardly believe *that* which was without them, to be expressly revealed from heaven. Besides, are there not difficulties innumerable in the natural world?"—"There are, undoubtedly," he answered. "But still you believe God to be the author of nature; do you not?"—"I do," he said. "Why then be inconsistent with yourself, and with a just analogy, by denying him to be the Author of revelation, because it has difficulties in it?"

Here being rather pushed by the argument, he said, "Yes; but in revelation there are things not simply above our reason, but contradictory to it."—"What are they?" I asked, eagerly. "That God should have a Son," he

replied; "and that one should be three, and three one. Are not all such things contradictory to our reason?"—"They are most certainly above and beyond it," I said; "but, as we know so little of heavenly things, it would be going too far to pronounce that they are contradictory to it. Indeed, if you mean that one person cannot be three persons, nor three persons one, you are in the right; but this has nothing to do with our doctrine, which is, that there are three persons, and one God. You would be right again, if you meant, that one could not be three, nor three one, in the same respects; but this also is what we do not assert. In fact, we assert only what we find in Scripture. And observe, we are not concerned to understand the mode in which any thing, asserted there, may possibly exist; but to shew our docility and submission, by embracing what we find, as true, and by applying it to the purposes for which it may appear to have been revealed. If we were required to understand what we are incapable of understanding with our present faculties, we should be hardly dealt with; but God only requires us to believe; and, I presume, you will allow, that there are an almost infinite variety of things which we believe without understanding them." He could not deny it. "Well then," I continued, "what we actually find in Scripture

is this; that there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; to each of whom is ascribed the name of God, or the attributes and operations of the Godhead; whilst we are told, at the same time, again and again, that there is but one God. Now there seems to be no way of reconciling the two assertions together but by supposing that these three persons are some how or other united in the same nature. This is the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity; dark and mysterious, without question; a doctrine, which the humblest, and the most lofty towering genius, are equally unable to scan; but it may be abundantly instructive nevertheless, and especially it may be intended to exercise our faith; for in this world, whether we like it or not, we must of necessity walk by faith, and not by sight."

Here I paused to allow Mr. Waring to speak, if he wished to do so. He was buried for some time in profound thought; and then he looked up, as if he expected me to proceed. I was aware that something yet remained, and therefore I resumed my discourse—"You may desire, perhaps," I said, "to hear more of these three persons; and particularly in what manner the Son is derived from the Father, and the Holy Ghost from both. But it would be a vain thing to attempt to sound the depths of these myste-

ries; and if they were as clear as the sun at noon-day, it is not easy to see that we should be the better for such knowledge. With respect to the Holy Ghost, indeed, there is really no ground to speculate upon at all; but the very name of Son opens a field for speculation in the case of Jesus Christ; and from what we know of sonship amongst ourselves, we might be led to suppose that the Sonship of Christ resulted from something analogous to human generation; a revolting idea with regard to God. But a moment's consideration convinces us that the analogy, although holding in some respects, cannot be complete in all; and also there may be a thousand modes of generation, utterly unknown to us, and none of them derogatory from our notions of God, and any one of them producing the relation of Father and Son. At all events the Son was with the Father in the beginning; that is, from all eternity the Father communicated to him the whole perfection of the Godhead. But what is of most importance to us is the practical doctrine arising from this relation between our Saviour and our God, and applicable to ourselves. For if God desired to save us, could he have invented a more endearing method of doing it than by sending his own Son from his bosom to suffer punishment in our stead? Could he have shewn his anger

against sin more terribly or more effectually than by requiring the death of his own Son as the only adequate atonement for it? And have we not the most forcible motives for loving the Son and obeying his laws, after his wonderful condescension and his painful sufferings in our behalf?"

Mr. Waring appeared, in some measure, to acquiesce in what I had said, but desired me to speak of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, which he thought liable to the grossest interpretations. "It is true," I answered; "Jesus Christ is the Son of God, both as he is God, and also as he is Man. In this latter sense of the expression we are better informed, because it is absolutely necessary that we should be so; but God forgive those who have attempted to pervert, or to ridicule, this wonderful, this momentous transaction! And mark; the Holy Spirit of God, all-pure himself, and the author of all purity in others, is the Agent in the transaction; which, we might have thought, would have banished at once from the minds of men every sinful unchaste idea, and inspired them with a holy reverence and awe. The Holy Spirit, however, is the Agent, for a wise reason, capable of being estimated by ourselves. The Son of God, that he might be the Saviour of men, was to assume the human nature, with all its infirmi-

ties, but was to be free from sin, original and actual. Now, if man had been the instrument of his Incarnation, he would have brought with him into the world the stain of original sin. He had, therefore, no human father; the Holy Ghost, all whose acts are holy, formed and fashioned the material substance of his body in the womb of the Virgin. Whilst that body was formed and fashioned, it was purified also by the Divine grace and influence of the Maker, and thus became the glorious temple of every virtue, without a single spot or blemish. Is there any thing now in this transaction which is fit to excite ridicule?" He confessed that there was nothing, when the matter was rightly understood. "On the contrary," I said, "who would not rather fall down, and worship, and adore, when he reads of the sacred Messenger from Heaven hailing the Virgin, as highly favoured of the Lord, and announcing to her, that the Holy Ghost should come upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadow her, for the production of some holy thing which should be called the Son of God! But hear, before I take my leave, a short summary of this whole dispensation—God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; he cannot tolerate in his presence the slightest stain of sin; he dwells in the dazzling splendour of inaccessible light, and even the

blessed Angels themselves with their wings veil their faces before him. Man debased by the fall and by his own transgressions, cannot approach him to ask for pardon and grace; the desire of all nations in all ages has been to find a Mediator. At length in the fulness of the times the Mediator comes, who is the brightness of the divine glory and the express image of the Divine person. But through the cloud of mortal frailty he shines with a milder radiance than his Heavenly Father. Incarnate by the Holy Ghost, and under his constant influence, he is utterly devoid of all sin; yet his virtues being human virtues, however high and exalted, they create in us no alarm or apprehension. We come boldly to him for help in time of need. He pleads for us the merits of *that* death, which, being a man, he was enabled to undergo; a death, which was an all-sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world, because it was the death of one, who, being in the form of God, emptied himself of his native glories, and exhibited himself in the fashion of a man, and stooped to the ignominy of the Cross. Well then may we think him mighty to save, and accept with confidence his gracious offers of reconciling us to our offended God! Will you be angry with him for his astonishing love towards you? Will you refuse to acknowledge his divine nature, because

he took the human? Will you not pray in his name, because he submitted to shame, and spitting, and death, for you?"

My zeal would have carried me on still further; but observing some favourable symptoms of remorse in my patient's countenance and manner, and also an inclination to speak, I stopped, and he immediately said; "You have drawn, Sir, it must be granted, a very pleasing picture of the chief features of the Christian religion. I see many things in a different light from that in which I have been too long accustomed to view them. I am obliged to you for every kindness which you have shewn to me during my sickness; but more especially for the pains which you have taken to correct my erroneous notions of Christianity. I cannot, however, undertake to receive the Sacrament at present; but to-morrow, at twelve o'clock, you shall give me, at least, the benefit of your prayers, and I will myself join with you." "I will be with you," I replied, as I rose to go away, "at the time appointed; and, meanwhile, may God send his Holy Spirit to enlighten your mind, and to purify your heart!"

As I pursued my walk in the discharge of other clerical duties, I reflected, with satisfaction, upon the scene which had just passed. We had not, indeed, yet arrived at any practical

religious act; but a time close at hand was fixed for a beginning; and a foundation appeared to be laid, which a few days ago seemed utterly hopeless. He had himself mentioned the Sacrament in a most abrupt and unexpected manner. I had said nothing which could have naturally led to it; and I cannot conjecture by what train of thought it occurred to him, or why he spoke of it, as he appeared, for the present at least, to have no intention of receiving it. However, I hoped that his having first mentioned it himself would facilitate my progress hereafter; and I prepared myself by meditation and secret prayer for the probable events of the morrow.

The morrow came, and I hastened to fulfil my engagement; but unavoidable accidents kept me on the road a few minutes beyond the hour of twelve. On entering the house I saw at once the marks of some great calamity. Mrs. Waring hurried down stairs to me; consternation sat upon her countenance. I enquired eagerly what was the matter; and was answered that her husband was dying. "Oh! Sir," she said, "he has been very impatient for your arrival. He has asked again and again if it were twelve o'clock.—Again and again he has expressed a great alarm lest you should not be here in time." I rushed up stairs, much disturbed, and

struck with awe at the doings of the Almighty. Here was a striking instance of the wretched weakness of man, and of *His* irresistible power. Mr. Waring, yesterday so much better and stronger, with the prospect of some weeks at least before him; and so far renewed in the spirit of his mind as to have appointed this day and this hour for the commencement of religious exercises, was stretched upon the bed of death, and now almost a lifeless corpse. His eyes were closed; his face was black and ghastly; his throat gurgled horribly, as the breath forced a passage through it. I seized his hand, and pressed it. He opened his eyes convulsively, and shut them instantly. He attempted to speak, but no intelligible sounds escaped from his lips. Nevertheless his mind was manifestly not yet gone; and I hoped that he still possessed the sense of hearing. I knelt down, therefore, and began in a loud and solemn tone that most beautiful, affecting, and divine prayer, which is prescribed for the sick at the point of their departure. His lips moved, as if he were trying to accompany me. This sign of God's gracious goodness towards him, in the midst of his dreadful agony, for a moment overpowered me, and of necessity I stopped. He began to speak, and I put my head close to catch his words. He said, "It is very com-

fortable to me;" and that was all which I could distinctly understand. It was evident that he did not finish the sentence which he intended; for he began over and over again in the same words. When he had entirely ceased, I resumed the prayer; his lips moved again for a short time, and then became motionless altogether. I grasped his hand, and asked him, if he died in the faith of Jesus Christ. He gave me no sign. Unwilling to witness his last moments, I withdrew; ejaculating to Heaven a petition for the salvation of his soul, and at length relieved by tears.

CHAPTER II.

MR. SAMBROOK.—ATHEISM.

As I was sitting at home one rainy day, and earnestly engaged in the preparation of a sermon for the following Sunday, expecting that the weather would have secured me from all chance of being disturbed by visitors, the name of Mr. Sambrook was announced. He was a considerable farmer, with whom I had long wished to have an opportunity of conversing, and which I had totally despaired of obtaining, unless it might please Providence to inflict some lingering calamity upon him. I was well aware that the object of his present visit was entirely secular; but I hoped to extract something spiritual out of it, and therefore put by my papers with great satisfaction, and desired that he might be brought into my study.

A short, fat, rosy man, beyond the middle age, was introduced. His dress and manner were rough for a person having so much intercourse with the neighbouring town; but there was a

liveliness and cheerfulness in his whole air and gestures, which induced me at once to think that I might say what I chose to him, consistently with my situation, without the danger of giving him offence. And certainly it seemed necessary that much should be said: at Church I never had seen him; he was accused of acts of uncommon profligacy, and he was bringing up his family in an absolute neglect of all religion. Having thus estranged himself from my spiritual ministrations, he assumed that he was emancipated from the payment of tithes; and, in fact, I was compelled to file a bill against him in the Exchequer, which now brought him to the rectory; for he did not love law, although he seldom did what was just without it; and indeed he loved it the less, because it sometimes forced him to do justice.

"I am come to you, Sir," he said, as I rose to meet him, "about this Exchequer business." I desired him to sit down, and I sat down myself near him. "I did not think, Sir," he began again, "that you would have been so harsh with me, as to exchequer me."—"I am sorry," I answered, "that you have made it necessary. My lawyer informed me that there was no other way of settling the account. Did he not write to you upon the subject long ago?" He allowed it. "How many times?" I enquired. He could

not say how many times; but I knew that he had written often. "Have you ever seen him?" I enquired again. "Yes," he said. "When?" I asked. "I think it is a year ago," he replied. "And did you not then fix a time for the settlement?"—"Why, to be sure I did," was his answer. "But you did not fulfil your promise, I suppose, by the event. Did he write to you again, when the day had passed, to remind you?" —"I cannot deny but he did," said Mr. Sambrook, very unwillingly, and not at all pleased with this system of questioning and answering, which only compelled him to condemn himself out of his own mouth. However, I proceeded. "You went to him, I presume, when matters were come to this extremity?" Roused at last, he exclaimed, "No, I did not, Sir. Indeed we are so *oppressed* with tithes in this parish, that there is no bearing it."—"I was not aware," I replied coolly, "of any oppression. Pray tell me how much you have paid since I became Rector."— "I cannot justly say, at a moment's notice," was his answer. "Have you paid one hundred pounds?" I asked. "Not so much as that," he replied. "Have you paid twenty pounds?" I asked again. "I cannot tell," he answered, "without looking at my receipts."—"Come now," I said, "be open and candid; have you ever paid me any thing?" He looked down,

ashamed and speechless. I pressed him; "You know, Mr. Sambrook, it is a very easy matter for me to ascertain the truth, by a reference to my tithe-agent. He assures me that he has called at your house so often, that he is quite weary of it; and that he has never been able to obtain any money from you, nor any account of the produce of the land which you occupy. Is this true? Have you ever paid a farthing? Speak honestly." At last he answered, "That upon turning the matter over in his mind, he could not recollect that he had ever paid any thing."—"Well then," I said, "Mr. Sambrook, *you* at least seem to have no reason to complain of being oppressed by tithes."—"Yes, Sir," he replied, "but this business has always been hanging over my head, and disturbing me, and keeping me in hot water. One day your collector calls; the next day comes a lawyer's letter; and perhaps a few days after you write yourself." — "A pretty strong proof," I said, "that we have done every thing to avoid law, and to put you to the least possible expence; but notwithstanding every warning, you denied me what I conceived to be my dues. You would not listen indeed to any amicable proposition, and therefore the evil day has at length overtaken you. I fear the filing of the bill will cost you ten pounds, without proceeding any further."—"Oh, Sir!" he ex-

claimed eagerly, "I hope you have no intention of going any further. What do I owe you?"—"If we were to go any further," I said, "the court would call upon you to declare on oath the quantity of your land, and the mode of tillage; but you may give me a written statement, if you please, and I will be satisfied with your word of honour."—"I have one in my pocket," he replied; "here it is." I took it, and examined it; and soon discovered several errors, not to say wilful falsehoods. I pointed them out, and a discussion arose, which ended in various amendments of the statement; and then, upon calculating the debt, I found that it exceeded one hundred pounds. "If I am required to pay such a sum as that," he cried out, "I had better go to jail."—"And what good will that do to yourself or your family?" I enquired. "It is ruin either way," he said; "I trust you will take a much smaller sum."—"If I do," I replied, "it will be liable to this mischief: all who pay with difficulty at present, will hold back so much the longer, expecting to profit by it in the end; and all who pay honourably, will think perhaps that they have acted unwisely; unless they know, as I am almost sure that some do, the infinite satisfaction which springs up in the mind from the consciousness of just dealing. However, I will run this risk. What are you willing to

pay?" Mr. Sambrook hemmed and hawed for some time, and at last proposed forty pounds. I closed with him instantly; upon which he began to think that if he had offered less, I would have taken less; at least he enumerated a hundred difficulties in the way of the payment of so large a sum, as he called it; but I stood firm, and the final agreement was, that he should pay all the expences incurred, and the forty pounds by instalments.

This weighty matter then being settled, and with the advantage on my side of having made a large concession, I now said, "Mr. Sambrook, if you would but come to Church, you would not perhaps grudge me my tithes; you might be inclined to adopt the opinion, that the labourer is worthy of his hire."—"No, sir," he answered at once, and eagerly, "nothing could ever reconcile me to tithes. Excuse me, Dr. Warton; I mean no personal disrespect to yourself. I think all tithes unjust and vexatious; and all who take them little better than robbers."—This he pronounced vehemently. "But they are established by the laws of the land; are they not?" I enquired. "Aye; there's the rub," he answered; "but the law itself robs me in a hundred ways."—"If," said I, "a man takes only what the law allows him, I do not see how he can be properly called a robber."—"What!" he

replied, "if I plough, and manure, and sow, and reap, all at my own single expence, and another steps in, and, without having done any thing, takes away one-tenth part of what I have raised by the labour of my hands, is not that a robbery, I ask you?"—"And I ask you, in return," I said, "what you think of the landlord; is he a robber too?" He hesitated, and so I proceeded. "The landlord neither labours, nor spends money upon the raising of the crops, and yet steps in and takes, I believe, a quarter of your produce. What say you to that? Is it a robbery or not?" He still hesitated; at length he said—"To speak the truth, I have no partiality for rents any more than for tithes. But the Landlord has something to say for himself; the land is his, and he lets it under the condition of receiving a rent, rather than cultivate it himself; the farmer enters of his own will into a bargain with the landlord, and therefore has no reason to complain of the rent, unless there be any unusual circumstances in the case." "Nothing can be more just," I replied, "than the account which you have given of the transaction; except perhaps what you said, 'that the land was his.' It is his certainly in one sense, but not altogether his, except under a condition. How does he become possessed of it?"—"He bought it, perhaps," was his answer; "or it came to him from his father."

"True," I said; "but, whether he bought it, or it came to him from his father, he obtained it, and he holds it, subject to tithes. Did not he or his ancestor, pay a smaller price for it than should have been paid, if it had been free from tithes?" He could not deny it. "They did not therefore purchase, and consequently could not possess, the whole power over the land, but only the power of appropriating to themselves nine-tenths of the produce?" He was obliged to allow it. "So that they could not convey to their tenants any right which they did not possess themselves?" Seeing the difficulties in which he was involved, he confessed it reluctantly. "And in point of fact," I said, "and in your own case, when you took your land, did not you know perfectly all these circumstances?" He was uneasy, and unwilling to answer; so I went on. "Did not you indeed argue with your landlord, and try to get an abatement of your rent, by pleading that there would be rates and tithes to pay, and consequently that the land was only worth so much?" He was pinched to the quick; I forced him, however, to confess that he did not know but that he had done so. "The question then comes to this," I said, "whether the rent and the tithe together amount to more than the rent would be, if there were no tithe. I do not mean in

your case; because it seems you adjusted the proportions previously, and therefore must have been satisfied. But, speaking generally, and upon supposition that all tithes were restored to the landlords, could this be any benefit to the tenants? Would not the landlords charge something for the superior value of the lands?"—"I must confess," he answered, "they would be fools, if they did not; but I have no doubt the tenants would gain by it."—"How?" I asked; "the landlords would charge the full value of the tithes; would they not? Is there any reason to suppose that they care so little about their own interests, as to take less than the worth of the thing? But, on the other hand, who ever heard of the Parson getting the full value of his tithes? What is your own case? You ought to pay me one-third of the rent, by all the common rules of calculation; whereas you do not pay me one-sixth of it. Or, if I reckoned by your expences in the cultivation of the land, and other incidents, which are perfectly known to me, I am quite confident that you do not pay me more than the half of what you should pay." He shook his head, and seemed to doubt; so I went through the calculations in detail, and proved that they were correct incontestably; and therefore the conclusion which I drew could not be avoided; namely, that it was better for the

tenants to have to do with the Parson, than with the landlord alone; because there was a great probability that the demands of the Parson on his own share would be moderate, and whatever he consented to lose, the tenants would gain.

"Yes," said Mr. Sambrook, "but I would not restore the tithes to the landlords; I would give them to the nation, for the benefit of the public."—"Out of the frying-pan into the fire!" I replied. "The immediate effect of such a measure must necessarily be to increase the payments of the tenants. For either the nation would sell the tithes to the highest bidder, or appoint commissioners to manage them; in both which cases the very utmost would be made of them; would it not?" This last position of Mr. Sambrook's was the most unfortunate of all; he had not a word to produce in its defence; but he was the more angry, because he was ashamed to discover, with how little shew of reason he was able to maintain his principles, and with what ease they were overturned. He made no direct answer to my question, but said, after a moment's hesitation, "Be this as it may, Sir; the origin of tithes was in the dark superstitious ages; and, as I told you before, nothing could be more unjust and vexatious."—"Why unjust, Mr. Sambrook?" I said.

"Has not every man a right to give his own, or any part of his own, to whom he will? Had not I a full power and right to give you sixty pounds, which I have just done? My wife and children may be the worse for what I give away from them; but that does not make the thing to be a flagrant case of injustice; does it?"—"Nobody denies all this," he replied; "but what has this to do with tithes?"—"Why," I said, "you cannot surely be ignorant, that tithes, generally speaking, were grants from the owners of the land. For certain advantages in return, which appeared to them of great importance, they set apart for ever a tenth portion of every thing which their land produced. This might have been a bad bargain or not; but certainly not unjust. Perhaps in some cases their children might have fancied that they had cause to complain; but nobody else could reasonably object to it, who had no claim upon the property. Suppose I were to establish myself with all my family in America, and bring a large tract of land into cultivation, and at length build a town, and get together a multitude of people; and suppose I should think that we might all be the better for some public visible worship of God; should I not have a perfect right to devote any part of my property to such an object? Nobody would presume to dispute the matter

with me but my own family; and it is true that they might be somewhat less rich. But what is *that* to *them?* The land is mine and not theirs; I bought it, and brought it to the state in which it now is; and, if to shew my gratitude to the Divine Author of my prosperity, and for the spiritual benefit of the population, I give him back a part of his gift, they ought to rejoice in my determination, and probably would do so. Every idea of injustice then is extinguished at once. What have you to object to this?"—"This is plausible, I grant," was his answer; "but he must be a great fool, who should lay such a vexatious burden as tithes upon the holders of his land through all ages."—"I presume," I said, "that you call it vexatious on the supposition that all tithes will be taken in kind; and that a great deal of plague and mischief will arise on that account. But you see that in practice things turn out otherwise; tithes are very rarely taken in kind; and the owner of them, especially if he be a Parson, is contented with a moderate compensation in money. But, at all events, the tenants cannot justly complain; they go with their eyes open; and if there be any thing really vexatious attached to their tenure, they are sure to get an equivalent in the rent. It is ridiculous therefore to talk of injustice and vexation as applicable to *them;*

and nobody else but the descendants of the original proprietors have a right to utter a complaint upon the subject; and I am confident also that, all things considered, they have none."

Mr. Sambrook, being beaten out of all his assertions, was reduced to silence, and seemed fearful to hazard any thing further. I said, therefore, "Well, Sir, I think I shall send you away in love with tithes, and full of eagerness, in future, to discharge every demand of that kind to the full." He smiled at this little piece of raillery, but answered, "No! no! Sir, this is a system that cannot go on; in spite of all that you may say, these enlightened times will not bear it." "Depend upon it," I rejoined, "the true wisdom is to leave the tithes where they are; for, besides the danger of touching property so ancient, which might create a fear and insecurity with regard to all property; besides the crying injustice of taking away what has belonged to others for so many ages, and violating the intentions of the original donors; it is really for the benefit of the community, for which a little while ago you expressed your anxiety, that the Clergy should possess these tithes rather than any other body of men." "How is that?" he asked. "I will tell you," I said. "I do not claim any merit at present for their religious services; but pray inform me

whether you think it useful to a parish, that money should be spent where it is got?" "I do," was his answer. "You have probably heard," I continued, "what great calamities have arisen in Ireland from the absence of the chief landed proprietors." "I have," he said; "they draw vast sums of money out of their own country, and spend them, either here, or, which is still worse, abroad." "They do," I replied; "and thus Ireland is impoverished, the stream continually setting away from it, and none returning; the labouring classes cannot find employment; want reduces them to despair, and they become fierce and barbarous." "It is too true," he said. "Well then," I asked, "is not the same naturally to be expected on a smaller scale in every parish here, unless there are counteracting causes? If the money be drawn away, and do not come back in some other shape, must not such a proceeding tend to impoverish the parish?" "Undoubtedly it must," was his answer. "It is, therefore," I said, "for the benefit of a parish, that the money obtained there should be spent there; is it not?" He readily allowed it. "Now, then, consider," said I, "what are the circumstances of this parish. Does not the chief land-owner live far away from us? Does he not receive large sums in the shape of rent? Does any part

of that money ever come back and circulate here for the good of the tradesmen or the poor?" He granted every thing. "And," I continued, "if he had twice as much as he has, would it not be just the same? Would it not be all spent out of the parish?" He had no doubt it would—"And observe," I said, "I do not mention this as any reproach to that Gentleman, who has a larger estate, and a more suitable house in a distant county, where he lives amongst his tenantry, and does all the good which may be effected by a resident land-owner; but I ask, be he absent voluntarily or of necessity, whether it would not be so far advantageous to this parish to have even the smallest portion of the produce of his land expended here?"—He concurred with me at once; not seeing, I suppose, the conclusion, although a very obvious one, which I was now ready to infer. "This then," I said, "is the case with respect to the Clergy generally. There may be exceptions; numerous exceptions perhaps, if you do not look to the whole body; but still this is the law, that the Clergy must reside upon their property; and they are induced to do it by the most forcible motives besides. In fact they do generally reside, and spend their fortunes amongst those from whom they are derived. Did you ever hear of my absence?"

"No, Sir," he answered; "I never did; but I can tell you, without meaning any offence, that there are plenty of people in this parish, who would be glad of your absence."—"Very likely," I said; "the people, for instance, that you meet with at the alehouses; the idle, the drunken, the Infidels and Atheists." This retort smote his conscience, and deprived him at once of a short imaginary triumph; so he was more candid than I expected, and confessed, that he believed it to be my wish to make them all better men, and that he had had opportunities of seeing some good which I had done amongst the poor. He told me also, that he had often said this behind my back, in spite of his hatred of tithes and tithe-owners. "Well;" I went on; "do not mind this now; whether I am a good or bad man, consider me only as a man of property; here I am always, and here I spend every thing. Do not I employ many tradesmen? Do not I consume a great many things produced here? Do not I find a good deal of work for the poor in my garden and grounds, and in the repairs of my house and buildings? For masons, carpenters, painters, glaziers, and others? And is not this so far so good?" He did not attempt to deny it; so I proceeded to conclude that the same might generally be said of all the Clergy, and consequently, that pro-

perty could not be in better hands. "And we may go," I said, "a step further; for in proportion to their property no set of men, I presume, will pretend to vie with the Clergy in doing good. Although they have often large families, yet they are always ready to contribute to every charity to the full extent of their means, and even beyond; and in their own parishes the assistance which they give to the sick poor, and their expenditure upon schools and other establishments is almost incredible. In many parts of England, and still more so in Ireland, where there are so few resident gentry, the poor have absolutely none but the Clergy to look up to for relief and comfort in their distresses."

Here Mr. Sambrook interrupted me, and said, that if this were true, it was but as it should be; for that by ancient law the Parson was bound to set apart one third of his tithes for the use of the poor; and he could not but regret that so wise a law had long ceased to be in force. "Such a law," I replied, "in all probability never existed at any time. Certainly there never was any Statute Law to such an effect; and if it had been the Common Law of the Land, it is most likely that it would have still remained. The tithes of this parish were given without any restriction whatever; and the same was the case

with most others; but in some cases the owners of the tithes were commanded to be hospitable and charitable; a command, which they executed to such an extreme as to produce much more mischief than good, and in fact so as to introduce idleness and beggary to the great detriment of the country. But this was put an end to by the shameful plunder of the Church property, which took place in the sixteenth century; and the noble persons, upon whom that plunder was lavished, not choosing to spend so large a part of it on the poor, as the lawful possessors before them had done, the country was overrun with paupers, and thence came the poor-laws; since which time the Clergy with their diminished property have been rated as all others, and in their full proportion. You will find this, Mr. Sambrook, to be a true account of the matter; so that my former conclusion is not shaken, and the Clergy are proved in every way to be amongst the most beneficial holders of property, of which this happy kingdom can boast."

"Well, well, Sir," said Mr. Sambrook, "I see you are determined to have all the argument your own way, and there is no debating with you. But I think, nevertheless, that there is no necessity for the Clergy to wallow in wealth. Your first Parsons, such as Peter and Paul, by

all accounts, were poor enough; and yet if you believe what is reported of them, they did more good than all the parsons that have lived since, put together." This was spoken sarcastically, and somewhat triumphantly; as if, after all his former failures, he had at length hit upon something, which turned the tables against me.

"As to the great riches of the Clergy," I replied, "you may be put down by a simple calculation, which cannot be disputed. It is this. If all the possessions of all the Clergy were divided equally amongst them, they would not furnish more than two hundred pounds a year to each. It is therefore quite absurd to talk of their wallowing in wealth. However, the revenue of the Church is in some respects a lottery, in which there are a few great prizes, to stimulate men of the greatest talents to devote themselves to her service, and to enable them to obtain the same rewards therein as they might have obtained in any other profession. But at all events this was the work of the original donors, to which nobody has a right to object, because nobody can pretend to be injured by it. And I can well conceive those excellent persons arguing with themselves in this manner, when they set apart the tithes for ever for the purposes of religion. 'We must have men thoroughly educated in all the learning of the times in which

they are called by Providence to live; they must be fit for the highest society, and able to cope with persons of the highest attainments; they must be under no necessity of resorting to trades for a maintenance, with which a due respectability would be incompatible; they must not be exposed to the danger of detracting from the sacredness of their characters by the slightest temptation to do any thing mean or base; they must not be exposed to contempt by a ragged coat, or worn out shoes; in short, they must not go about, as Peter and Paul did, without purse, without scrip, without two coats; because they have not, like Peter and Paul, the immediate supernatural interposition of the Almighty in their favour.' Indeed, Sir, you have not marked the difference of the circumstances—God would have the first establishment of Christianity to be indisputably his own work; and therefore he sent the fishermen of Galilee to preach it, without learning, without eloquence, without power, without riches; but he gave them what was better than all, an ability to perform miracles, and his extraordinary providence constantly attended upon them in every difficulty and danger. When men asserted that they were commissioned by God, and in proof of it did such things as could be done only by the power of God; giving sight to the blind, for instance, and

speech to the dumb, and other similar things, by a mere word or touch; they wanted no human advantages to rouse and fix the attention of mankind, who were roused sufficiently by their astonishment, and by their hopes and fears, to listen to the men of God. But now, if a man of outward poverty and wretchedness, in a tattered dress, and with an uncouth dialect, were to come into large assembly, and without any of those wonderful credentials, were to pretend that God sent him to speak to them; what would be the consequence?" "Why," said Mr. Sambrook, laughing, "they would pelt him with mud, and with addled eggs too, if they could get them; and richly would he deserve it." "I should be sorry for that however," I replied; "but at all events he would be taken for a fool or a madman by the generality, although possibly some few equally foolish or mad with himself, might enlist themselves under his banners. But this system, you plainly see, will not do. We must have men with all the human qualifications mentioned before; and these cannot be had without a certain degree of wealth, both as the means and the end; so that if our ancestors were determined to have a body of Clergy adequate to their business, they could not have done better than endow them as they did. As to tithes indeed, they took the notion from God himself, who thus

endowed the Priests and Levites under the Mosaic Law."

"Oh! stop, Sir," he exclaimed; "this is all Greek to me. I know nothing about it." "Very likely," I replied; "but I must say a few words more, and then I have done. The rain is now over, and we shall both be wanted abroad. In giving tithes then our ancestors, I repeat it, were eminently wise, as it is a revenue which keeps pace with the improvement of ages. If they had established a money-payment, or a rent-charge upon their estates, it would now perhaps have been worth little or nothing. Of one thing they were not sufficiently aware, the increase of the population; which has been so rapid and so vast as to multiply the labours of the Clergy to an excessive degree, whilst their tithes are the same as in the earliest times, or have only improved with the general improvement of the country. Do you know how many houses have been built in this Parish in your own memory?" "No, I do not," he answered; "but certainly some hundreds." "And of what description?" I enquired. "Chiefly for the poor," he said. "And how many families dwell in each house?" I enquired again. "Seldom less than two," he replied. "Now consider then," I said, "that these houses are all built upon land which formerly paid tithes; that the occupants are all too

poor to pay Easter-offerings; that their sick are to be visited, and their children baptized; and that they are all in their turns assailing me for something or other in their several troubles; consider this, and you will be able to understand whether the Clergy of this day are not in a much worse situation than their predecessors of former times, and not near so rich as their original benefactors intended and wished them to be. I hope therefore, Mr. Sambrook, now that you are better acquained with the subject, you will no longer join in the senseless cry against us; that you and I shall be good friends in future; that you will fulfil your present bargain punctually and honourably; and that by coming to Church you will give me opportunities of conferring upon you the greatest good which one man can confer upon another; *that* of saving your soul."

Here I concluded, and he said nothing more in reply, than that he was desirous of being on friendly terms with me, and that he would do his utmost to discharge his debt; as to the rest he shook his head, and gave me no encouragement. Thus we separated for this time. The payments that were to be made, would, I supposed, bring us together again often; and I trusted that something more for his benefit might hereafter be done.

The appointed day for the first payment having arrived, and passed without notice; I could not help suspecting that Mr. Sambrook had still some intentions of deceiving me, and of escaping from his own contract. However he might have been enlightened on the subject of tithes by our last conversation, and his particular prejudices against them lessened; yet to pay away money on any account, where it was due, was contrary to his nature and habits. The taxes and rates were seldom obtained except after the first process of the law, a summons by a magistrate, or a lawyer's letter; so that it would have been ridiculous for the Parson to expect better treatment. An opening however having now been made for an attempt to bring him gradually to Christian principles; I determined to proceed by the gentlest methods, and, if possible, to give no cause for fresh irritation. I walked therefore in the direction of his house, and found him in one of his fields, near home, looking at a most beautiful apple tree, which was in full bloom, and covered with blossoms of various shades of colour.

After the usual salutations, fortunately, he began himself with apoligising for his want of punctuality to his engagements, and having stated some reason or other for it, not very satisfactory, I accepted it nevertheless at once;

and he then paid me the sum that was first due; being, as he affirmed, about to bring it to me. At the same time he expressed a hope, which was wonderful for such a person, that others paid me better than he did. "They do, certainly," I replied; "but now that we are better acquainted, you will perhaps not yield to any of them. But what must we do for a receipt?"—"Oh! never mind;" he said, "your word is as good as a stamp."—"I hope it is," I answered; "but my memory may fail me."—"I will trust to that too," he replied. This amused me exceedingly; but I found universally, that all, who persisted in calling me rogue and robber behind my back, never hesitated for a moment to put the most entire confidence in me, when we had any money transactions together.

"Very well," I said; "I only wish that you would trust me in things of much greater importance. Mr. Sambrook, you are getting into years; infirmities will come, and sickness, and death. But it would be wise to reflect seriously upon your condition, before you are forced to do so, and when to do it will be more painful, and less easy. Indeed, when I look at your frame and figure, I cannot help fearing, that you may be carried out of this world by one of those sudden, instantaneous, unexpected attacks, which are now so common amongst us; and

that it may not please Providence to give you any warnings by a gradual diminution of your health and vigour. You appear to me, Sir, as far as I have the power of judging, and I speak it with unfeigned sorrow, you appear to be living without the worship and even the knowledge of a God; and is not this, besides the danger of it, to degrade yourself to a level with the animals below you, brute and irrational, who feed, and sleep, and perform all their other offices, without being conscious of a Creator and Preserver?"

I watched him closely whilst I was speaking, but I could not ascertain the current of his thoughts. On the whole, I conjectured that shame alone prevented him from avowing himself at once an Atheist. When I paused, he said, "That he considered a sudden death as much preferable to a lingering one, and hoped that his own might be sudden."—"What?" I asked, "whether prepared or unprepared?"—"I am so far prepared," was his answer, "as to be certain that I must die; and I do not find things go on so smoothly and pleasantly here, as to make me very desirous of a long life."—"But what do you think of the next life?" I asked again; "things may go on less smoothly and pleasantly there, unless we have made a due preparation here by virtue and piety. You have a soul,

which will never die; and which is now in a state of trial; God, who is a God of justice, will judge it hereafter, when the trial is finished; and if he find it defiled with drunkenness, and sensuality, or any other vice, he will assign to it a terrible lot in eternity. Do you believe all this?"

"No, Sir," he replied: "these things are too deep for me. I was brought up from my youth to a life of labour. I am no scholar; but I have talked with people who are; and they say that they believe none of these things. And it seems reasonable that no man should be forced to believe what he cannot understand. How do I know that there is any God? I cannot understand what sort of Being he can be, nor where he can live, nor how he can know what I am doing or thinking now. I say the same about souls, and another world after this, and a last judgment, and everlasting punishments: I cannot understand it; and I stick to this, that I cannot believe, and therefore cannot act upon any thing which I do not understand." In saying all this, he spoke with a tone of vehemence and positiveness, which plainly implied that he thought his position impregnable.

"What tree is this," I enquired, "which looks so uncommonly beautiful?"—"Why, an apple tree, to be sure," he answered. "And does it

generally bear fruit?" I enquired again. "Yes," said he, "abundance; and of the very best sorts too; for you see the different flowers, and may guess therefore that it bears different sorts." I went on; "And what do you do with the apples, when they are ripe? You give them to the pigs, I suppose, or throw them upon the dunghill."—"Are you mad, Sir!" he interrupted me eagerly. "They are fit for the king's table; They fetch the very highest price in the market; and I prize them exceedingly."—"How delighted I am," said I, "to have met you near this remarkable tree! For I have always been extremely desirous of understanding something about the production of flowers and fruits; and as you are the wise man who never believe or act upon any thing which you do not perfectly comprehend, I hope you will not be so unkind as to refuse to impart your knowledge to me."

He was not exactly aware of the drift of my reasoning; but he suspected by my manner that I wished to banter him a little; so he answered cautiously, that he would gladly tell me whatever he knew. "Oh, do not deceive me," I said, "or cut short my expectations! of course you know every thing about it; or you would not have done as you have, first planting this tree itself; then grafting upon it the various sorts; pruning every year the superfluous

branches; plucking off the superabundant fruit, for the improvement of the rest; and, in short, pursuing all the rules of good husbandry, which are generally crowned with success." He doubted where this would end, and was silent; so I proceeded. "There can be no doubt, I suppose, that earth, and water, and air, and heat, and light, work all the wonders that we ever see in this apple tree. Do you know of any other element that is in any way concerned in the growth of vegetables?" He thought there could not be any other. "Well then," I said, "and how do these elements make the tree grow?"—"The sap rises in the spring," he answered, "and spreads through the whole."—"But what is the sap?" I asked. "Is it any thing else but the mixture of those several elements?" He allowed that it could not be any thing else. "Certainly," I said, "it cannot. Now therefore tell me how this sap makes wood, and bark, and leaves, and flowers, and fruit. Had this tree any leaves, or flowers, a month ago?"—"It had not," he said. "What a nimble, and astonishing, and skilful workman, then," I said, "must this sap be, to do so much, and to produce such beautiful things in so short a space! and so unlike the sap itself too! What pencil painted these flowers with such lively varying delicate tints, and yet had only the gross materials of earth

and water to do it with; assisted indeed by the lighter ones of air, and heat, and light? And observe; the sap rises, no doubt, without variation in itself, to that point in the stem from whence the different branches set out: what is it which changes the proportions of its component parts afterwards? For almost every branch, you see, bears a different flower from any other, and therefore the sap must run through it in a different proportion, or with a different power. Explain this to me, and I will thank you heartily."

"Oh! Sir," he answered, "it is Nature that does it all—Nature is wonderful indeed!"—"But who, or what is Nature?" I asked. "Is Nature any living being, or what else?"—"Not a living being, certainly," he said; "but what else I cannot tell."—"If Nature, then," I asked again, "be without life and understanding, what can she do by herself? In point of fact, when we talk of Nature, do we not always mean the rule, or law, or manner, in and by which all things produce their ends and objects? As in the case of the sap; the sap rises by a certain rule, and varies the proportions of its component parts by a certain rule, and disposes itself over the branches of the tree by a certain rule; and then we say this is the effect of Nature."—"That is it, I dare say," was his answer; and

he seemed glad to escape from the difficulty. But I immediately rejoined, "if this be so, then we must have somebody who made the rule; somebody who laid down the law; somebody who ordained the manner, according to which all matter acts. Rules and laws do not make themselves; do they?" Here he began to be alarmed, lest he should be forced to acknowledge the necessity of a God; so he said, "May not all these things take place by chance?"—"That seems impossible," I replied. "It is at least incredible. Did you ever see these branches bearing different fruits at different times?"—"No," he said. "But always the same?" I asked. "Yes," he answered; "always the same."—"Then chance," I continued, "is entirely out of the question. Things which never vary must proceed by some steady, constant rule; must they not?" He could not deny it. "Who is it then," I asked, "that made this rule, which could not make itself?" He was pressed very hard, but could not bring himself to confess that there must be a God. At last, after having tried various ways, as it seemed, in his own mind, to avoid this necessity, he exclaimed, with a sort of joy, "I have it! It must be, that things have gone on in the same manner always without any beginning at all. This accounts for every thing at once in the shortest

and simplest way."—"It appears to me, on the contrary," I said, "that this supposition of your's accounts for nothing, and increases all the difficulties. Suppose a vast chain hanging from the sky, and reaching within a few yards of the earth; and I should ask you, what supports the bottom link, and you should tell me that it was supported by the link above it, and that those two links were supported by the third link, and so on; and then I should ask what supports the whole chain? Should you think it a sufficient answer to say that the chain had no first link, and was endless? Must not an endless chain be a very long one, and consequently be a very heavy one, and require a much greater power to support it? If a chain of ten links requires a certain force to hold it, must not a chain of an infinite length require an infinite force? Because the chain is of an infinite length, you will not surely say that it requires no force whatever to support it."

I twisted this into different forms, as he was obstinately silent, and manifestly confounded, though resolute not to yield; and then I added, that it was the same with every chain of causes and effects. "Be the chain as long as it may, it requires some first and mighty cause to set the whole in motion. It is the same also with the rule; however long it may have been in ac-

tion, there must have been a maker of it; and the wiser the rule, the wiser the maker. Indeed in the case of a rule, the matter is strikingly evident. If this apple tree had understanding and speech, it would tell us, no doubt, that its prime end and object was to bear fruit, would it not?"—"It would certainly," he said. "And are there not," I asked, "many contrivances about the tree with a view to this particular purpose of bearing fruit?" He allowed it. I gathered a blossom, and continued, "Look at this blossom; do you see these fine threads, which are called the chives?"—"I do," he answered. "They are the male parts of the flower," I said; "and the fruit could not be produced without them. See again these still finer threads, in the very centre; they are called the females, and are absolutely essential. In the little heads of the chives, you observe, there is a thin powdery dust; some of it falls, when ripe, upon the summits of these female threads, and it is detained there by a glutinous liquid; afterwards it passes down each thread, which is a tube, and having arrived at the bottom, the embryo fruit is formed, and begins to swell, and at last reaches the size of the apple, which you commend so much. Is not all this wonderful? Are there not plain marks about it of contrivance and design?" He confessed that it seemed

so. "And who ever heard," I asked, "of contrivance and design, without a contriver and designer?" He was compelled to grant that it was inconceivable. "Is not a watch," I said, "a very beautiful and skilful contrivance for shewing the hour and minute of day and night?" "It is indeed," he answered. "And when you see it," I continued, "do you not immediately infer a watchmaker?"—"I do," he replied. I asked again, "You would think it absurd, would you not, to suppose that this exact order, directed to such an object, sprung from chance?" He granted it. "And if any person should tell you, that this watch, after all, was not really made by a watchmaker, but by another watch adapted to the purpose, and furnished with a most complicated machinery; what would you think of it?" "Why, I should think," said he, "that the maker of the other watch was ten thousand times more clever than I thought the maker of the simple watch."—"You would be perfectly in the right," I said. "And the last thing, that would ever come into your thoughts, would be, that a watch, which was so artfully framed as to make another, had no contriver and maker of itself?" He allowed it would; and then I enquired, if he thought we could get rid of the necessity of a contriver, designer, and maker, by supposing an endless series of watches, each making

the next to it in the series. "I might have thought so before," he replied; "but after what has been said, I cannot think so any longer."—"Nothing can be clearer, and more indisputable," said I. "Wherever there is an undoubted contrivance, there is an undoubted contriver also, be he at whatever distance he may from the productions of the present moment. Now, I ask then, whether man be not one of the most astonishing contrivances of all? And if so, whether you think it reasonable that a watch should have a contriver, and man not?"

He was speechless, and trembled a little; fearing, as it should seem, that there must be a God, who at first created him, and might hereafter judge him. Seeing him thus affected, I concluded the conversation; hoping that I had planted a sting in his bosom, which would give him continual pain, until he had searched the wound to the bottom; and I added only, in a tone of moderation, and without the least appearance of a triumph, "Act in religion, Mr. Sambrook, as you do in other things. How many things are there, of which you know nothing; and yet you believe and act, as if your knowledge was perfect? Why not the same in religion, which is of infinitely more importance than any thing else? And now that you have discovered a God, the wise contriver and maker

of all things, I leave you to consider, whether he ought to be served and worshipped, or not. Good morning! I wish you well with all my heart." He bowed, and we parted.

I did not see Mr. Sambrook again so soon as I expected. He made two more payments, but not in person; the money having been sent by a child, without any demand for a receipt or memorandum. At length, before the next payment became due, he visited me himself, in no slight tribulation. My lawyer had delivered a bill of the expences, and had fixed a day for the discharge of it; this was not attended to, and the consequence was that a letter had arrived, thundering out all the vengeance of the law. I promised at once to arrange this matter for him; and accordingly I wrote immediately, in his presence, to desire, at my own risk, that the payment of the costs might be deferred till after the payment of the instalments.

This then having been settled to his satisfaction, I expressed my regret that two or three Sundays had passed since our last conversation, without my seeing him at Church. "Why, Sir," he said, "to tell you the truth; I think what you said to me was very clever, and I could not contradict it at the time. But I have considered since that the matter is not quite so

clear, as you tried to make it appear to be. You told me that God contrived and made every thing; and you spoke also of his wisdom. Now a wise person, I should suppose, would never contrive or make any thing useless, or mischievous; and you cannot deny that we are over-run with such things, both of the animal and vegetable kinds—What say you to this, Sir?" "You mean, perhaps," I replied, "such animals as destroy your corn and your fruit; and vegetables, like nettles, and docks, and brambles, and briars, and other weeds, which cost you so much pains to extirpate, and which, if neglected, would exhaust upon their own growth all the riches of the soil." "I do," he said, "And as you have yourself mentioned nettles, I should be glad if you would shew me their use; that I might have a reason for thinking that they had a wise maker."

Mr. Sambrook was disposed to be jocose with me, fancying that I could not attempt so ridiculous a thing as to prove nettles to be useful. However, I enquired, if he would consider any substance to be useful which contributed to the support of men. He allowed that he should; but he was sure that nettles did not so contribute; unless I pretended that nettle-broth was good for an ague. Here he laughed, and seemed highly diverted with the notion of nettles contributing to the support of mankind. I was

pleased to see him in good humour, and calling one of my children, I desired him to bring me the largest nettle that he could find in a few minutes, and to take especial care not to prick himself with it. Mr. Sambrook was still more amused, and joked with the little boy about carrying the nettle, and advised him to put his gloves on. Meanwhile I asked whether men ate millstones. He began to think me crazy; "but," I said, "mill-stones may be useful, may they not, although they are not eatable?" He recollected that they were employed in grinding corn, and therefore allowed that they were useful. "So that," I went on, "to prove a thing to be useful to men as contributing to their support, it is only necessary to shew that it is in the order of causes, like the mill-stone, near or remote." He granted it. "Now look at this nettle then," I said, which the child had just brought into the room; and upon the leaves of which, on a slight examination, I discovered several insects of the same species, enjoying, as it appeared, a most delicious meal. "Well," he cried, "I did not know to a certainty before, that any creature loved nettles. But what has this to do with our present talk?" "It is most closely concerned with it," I replied. "These insects are the food of other animals, and those other animals

are the food of man." "Yes, Papa!" said the little boy; "I have often seen the birds flying out of the nettles, but I never knew before, that they went there for their food."

Mr. Sambrook was struck on a heap; but his natural shrewdness did not forsake him; and he enquired immediately, whether it would not have been more wise to have provided something for these insects that was less mischievous to us. "Then," said I, "you would wish, I suppose, rather than not, that snails, and caterpillars, and other noxious creatures, as they are called, fed upon your lettuces, and cabbages, and richest fruits?" "Not that exactly neither," he replied. "Would it not be best," I enquired, "if they fed entirely upon weeds?" He allowed it. "But these weeds must have ground to grow upon; must they not?" I enquired again, "They must certainly," was his answer. "And wherever they grow," I said, "they become hurtful to other more valuable plants; do they not?" "They do," he replied. "Is industry better than idleness?" I asked. "Certainly" he answered. "Does not the clearing away of weeds absolutely require industry?" I asked again—"And is not idleness always punished by the growth of weeds, and the consequent impoverishment of the valuable crop?" It is true, undoubtedly," was his answer. "Then

after all," I said, "these contemptible and noxious vegetables, as we consider them, may answer the purposes of a wise Being, who has a vast variety of creatures to provide for, and who may wish to make the virtue of industry necessary to man. In fact the whole truth of the matter is to be found only in this precious book, which lies here upon my table, and out of which I will now read to you the account of it."

"Dear me! Sir," he exclaimed; "I never thought that I was come here to have the Bible read to me!" "What can the Parson do better," I said, "than to read God's book to his flock; and what can you do better than study it? In our last conversation you told me that it was impossible for you to ascertain any thing about the nature of God; now I tell you that you may ascertain every thing necessary to be known about him by the study of this holy book. Listen therefore, at least whilst I read the explanation of this one fact." I then took the Bible into my hands, and selected a few verses from the three first chapters of Genesis; particularly dwelling upon the circumstance, that when God rested from the great work of creation, he saw every thing which he had made, and behold it was very good; but that after the transgression of Adam and Eve, the ground was cursed for their sakes, and commanded to pro-

duce thorns and thistles; that they and all their descendants might eat bread in the sweat of their brows, until they returned unto the dust, from which they were taken. Having commented upon this great transaction in such a manner as to make him catch at least some glimpses of it, (for he was entirely uninformed about it before) I proceeded thus—"See now, Mr. Sambrook, the wonderful goodness of God, who even in judgment always remembers mercy. He diminished indeed the original happiness of man; but what a happy world is this after all! Many people have not sense enough to see it, because it is indulged commonly to all of us; and too many who see it have not gratitude enough to acknowledge it. Food and drink, generally speaking, cannot be procured without labour; can they?" "Certainly not," he answered. "And people must eat and drink to live; must they not?" I asked. "They must," he said. "So that if it had been a painful thing to eat and drink, yet men would have gladly submitted to it; would they not?" I asked again. He agreed with me that they undoubtedly would. "What do you think of it then yourself?" I enquired. "Do you reckon it a painful thing to eat and drink, which you would not undergo, but for the sake of preserving life?" He candidly confessed that eat-

ing and drinking, on the very contrary, were amongst the most pleasant and delightful of all acts, and that probably millions of men were scarcely conscious of any other pleasure. "But God," I said, "who made eating and drinking necessary, might have superadded to it either pain or pleasure, just as it suited his own temper; his having made it pleasant and delightful therefore was a signal mark of pure, abundant, and disinterested goodness."

Mr. Sambrook seemed to be let into a new world. He made no scruple whatever to tell me that he never recollected once to have thought of such things; and I might perhaps have pursued the conversation in the same strain to his advantage; but I was aware that he could not conveniently be spared from his business, and therefore I dismissed him with these words—"This, Sir, is but one proof, out of an infinite number of proofs, of God's goodness. The whole day would be gone before we could speak of a millionth part of them. His mercies are over all his works. Think of this, and you will begin to love him, and to desire to please him and serve him, and to be more satisfied with yourself. And, however you may be conscious to yourself that you fall below the perfection of his law, yet do not fear. He, in the exercise of the same goodness, has provided a remedy for

this, with which you may become acquainted, by reading the New Testament, and by frequenting your church. In both those acts too you may expect God's especial blessing to light upon you."

I rung the bell, and he departed, without letting me into the present state of his feelings. If the coming to church was to be the test of any serious change, I feared that he would find it a most difficult thing to do so. Shame alone was too likely to deter him. However, I trusted to time, the continuance of our conversations, and the good providenee of God.

In the interval between this and our next meeting, an awful event occurred in Mr. Sambrook's family, which was calculated to promote my views, by leading naturally to serious and solemn reflection. A sister, who had come from a distance to visit him, died suddenly in his house. He attended the funeral, which took place in my own church-yard; and I myself performed the ceremony. In this and in the other occasional services I always take the utmost pains to give them their due effect, not only from feeling, but out of policy. Many persons are present at marriages, and christenings, and funerals, who never have come to church on any other occasion; and they are the

only opportunities which the Minister has of making any impression upon them whatever; opportunities, which he would be unwise to neglect. If he can but touch their hearts by the solemn devoutness of his tone and manner in these services, they may be tempted to come and see what he is in his greater function of preaching. I know indeed that this has frequently happened; and I know also on the other hand that much scandal has arisen, where this salutary, and but decent, practice has not been attended to. People have gone away with the full idea that the Minister cared nothing about these duties; which was either a great shock to their feelings, if they were religious persons, or confirmed them in their irreligion, if they were the contrary. In both cases great mischief has been done.

On the present occasion I acted only as I always do; and I found that it was noticed to my advantage and the credit of our religion. The funeral was on a Sunday, and the crowd was the more numerous. In a few days after, I met Mr. Sambrook on a private foot-path, and he immediately mentioned the subject, and told me, that his late sister's husband, now a widower, had derived much comfort from the manner in which I had read the burial service. "I believe, Mr. Sambrook," I said, "that I always

read it in the same manner; but perhaps unconsciously on your account I might have given it somewhat of an additional awe and solemnity. Your poor sister died suddenly; I have told you that I thought it probable your own end might be the same. This was in my mind, whilst I stood by the side of the grave, and saw you looking into it; and possibly it might have led me imperceptibly to speak with a more serious and warning voice—God grant that it may have succeeded!"

He was quite at a loss what to say to this. He was affected in some way or other, which I could not explain; and at all events he seemed to wish to escape from any further conversation. But I was unwilling to lose so promising an opportunity; and therefore I turned about, and offered to accompany him in the direction in which he was going. He could not refuse with any degree of civility; so we walked together; and that I might not appear to force the subject of religion upon him, in season or out of season, I waited to take advantage of any thing which he might happen to say.

The funeral was still in his thoughts; and the first observation that he made was, that the description of the resurrection of the dead, which I had read to them in the lesson, was certainly very fine, but that he could not believe a word

about the resurrection itself. "Do you think it not possible," I asked, "or not probable?" "Neither the one," he answered, "nor the other." "As to the possibility of the thing," I said, "your difficulty, I presume, arises from your knowing, that the body after death is dissolved into dust, and in many cases scattered abroad in different places; and you cannot conceive how the particles can be brought together again, so as to preserve the identity; or, in plainer words, so as to be known to be the same body." "That is it exactly," said he. I was very much relieved by this answer; for I was alarmed lest I might be led into an interminable discussion about the soul, in regard to which I was sure that he had none but the most vulgar ideas; and probably he had no clear ideas at all about the soul as distinct from the body; and I did not see how we could ever arrive at any thing practical by that line of argument. I therefore proceeded at once to argue upon his own difficulty, and was very careful not to put any new one into his head.

"You have mentioned St. Paul," I said, "already, as a most distinguished preacher of the Gospel. It seems, therefore, that you know something of his character. It was he who wrote the epistle from which the lesson is taken. Do you remember how he explains, or illustrates,

the resurrection?" "Yes;" he replied; "by the sowing of seed; but I could not comprehend it; in short, it seemed quite ridiculous." We were walking at this moment through a field of wheat. "If I am not mistaken," I said, "this is one of your fields." He nodded assent. "And perhaps you sowed this wheat yourself?" He assented again. "But it did not occur to you, it seems, that whilst you were sowing, you were in fact burying every single grain in its own little grave." "No, it did not," he said; "but it was certainly something very much like it." "Very like indeed," I proceeded; "and therefore so far St. Paul was in the right. And the grains, which you scattered about in the furrows, were dead; were they not?" "Why, to be sure," he answered, "they might be called dead; as all the moisture, which they had in them whilst they were growing, seemed to be entirely dried up, and there was no appearance of life about them; they had become quite hard, and fit to be ground into flour." "Well;" I said, "and what became of them, when they were mixed with the soil and buried? Did they not begin to rot, as any human body might do?" He granted it. "Still then St. Paul is correct; but now comes the surprising change. When you might have expected the grains of seed to have rotted entirely away, and to disappear

altogether, up sprung from them innumerable small green blades, apparently of grass; did there not?" "There did," he answered. "In fact," I said, "if you had examined those seeds, whilst they were rotting in the ground, you would have found something in them most wonderful amongst all the wonderful things which surround us; you would have found in each the rudiment, or principle, or whatever it may be called, of a new plant; something indeed, which had all the parts of a plant in miniature, and which only wanted the heat and moisture arising from the putrefaction of the rest of the seed to make it vegetate and grow; have you observed this, or not?" "I have often observed it," he replied. "So then," I said, "the great Apostle might have thought of some similar principle in the decaying body of a man, which hereafter might shoot into life, and produce the new man." "Yes," said he, "but we see nothing of this sort in the human body." "Nor do we," I rejoined, "in the dry grain; it appears afterwards according to the law, which God himself has established. For, you may remember, in talking of the apple-tree, we were forced to impute every thing to the will and the wisdom of God; and so we must in this case. Pray what lodged that little embryo-plant in the body of the seed? What made it sprout upwards and downwards,

upwards into the green blade and downwards into the root? Who put the embryo-plant into the right position to do this? And did not a stem afterwards issue out of the blade, and then an ear from the top of the stem, and lastly was not the ear filled with grains? Who planned all this, and ordained the means by which the plan was executed? You and I know nothing at all about it; no, nor the wisest philosopher. In many cases, in which we are ignorant, a person more skilled in the knowledge of nature than we are, may be perfectly informed; so that it would be vastly foolish for us to say that such or such a thing cannot be believed, or cannot be, merely because we do not understand the how or the why of the thing; for others may understand it very well, and we ourselves may come to understand it hereafter. In this case, however, of the growth of the corn, we are all ignorant, both wise and simple; and we shall probably remain so. But what of that? The thing is as it is, and goes on nevertheless—Why? because God is the author of it, and keeps the necessary causes in uninterrupted operation.—Have you any thing to object to this?"

"I have not," he answered, "I see clearly that there must be a God, and I begin to admire his works." "Go on, and prosper." I said; "the more you know of them, the more you will ad-

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mire them; and the more, I hope, you will love and serve the Doer! But now tell me, is there any thing more wonderful, or more hard for God to do, in the resurrection of a dead body from the grave, than in the production of the wheat from the seed?" "There is a great difference," he replied, "in the two things after all." "There may be a hundred differences," I rejoined; "but what of that? Does it follow, that of two things one is possible, and the other impossible, because this other is not like the former in all respects, when God too is the worker?" He could not say that. "Well then," I went on; "here is a thing, namely, the resurrection of the dead, of which we have yet no experience. St. Paul, indignant that any man should doubt it, when God had said that he would do it, tells the doubters that they might form some idea of it from the sowing of seed and the growing of the grain, which is equally inexplicable, but of which the fact is well known to us. Shall we quarrel with the Apostle, because the two things cannot be exactly alike in all circumstances? But what are the circumstances that are unlike?" "The new plant," he answered, "springs up from the seed after a short period, before the whole seed itself is turned into vegetable mould." "Very well," I said;" "but it did not suit the purposes of Providence, that there should be a

resurrection of the dead soon after the burial of each corpse, but one simultaneous resurrection of all at the last day; on account of the general judgment of mankind then to take place, and thereafter the everlasting separation of the good and the bad into Heaven and Hell." He seemed to shudder at this thought; but he made no remark. I therefore proceeded—"To bring about a general resurrection at the same moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the mighty sound of a trumpet piercing to the remotest corners of the universe; undoubtedly there must be causes at work with which we are unacquainted, or God himself may do it immediately by an especial act of power, when the appointed time is come. Either way there ought to be no difficulty to us, unless we think that God is neither all-wise, nor almighty. He, whose contrivances are so subtle and so complicated in thousands of natural things may readily be supposed capable of this; and he, whose power was great enough to make man at the first, and is great enough to unmake him every day in the midst of health and strength, may readily be supposed capable of making him again after death—Is not this so?"

"These are wonderful things," he answered, "but I cannot contradict them. I wish, however, to know what will become of bodies which

are scattered about in various distant places, and parts of which perhaps have passed into other substances." "Alas! Alas! Mr. Sambrook," I said, "if you had but looked into your Bible now and then, you would have had more exalted ideas of God's power; so as not to stumble at such petty difficulties. He that said, let there be light; and there was light; cannot he order all the particles of a man's body, scattered wherever they may; east, west, north, and south; on the tops of the highest mountains, and at the bottoms of the deepest oceans; to return in an instant of time to the rest of the mass, and to rebuild the former man? Certainly he can; he has only to will, and the thing is done. He cannot but know where every particle is, and no particle can be beyond the reach of his power. But perhaps nothing of this kind will be necessary; all indeed that is necessary is this; that after the resurrection we should be certain we are the same persons as before; and that is possible with a very great change of our bodies, as is proved in our passage from childhood to old age; every particle is changed again and again, and yet we are always conscious of our own identity. Let us have done then with cavils, Mr. Sambrook. It is God who has promised it, and he will not fail. This settles the question of probability at once.

We should have known nothing about it, but for God's revelation. We might have hoped a little about the soul, that it would survive the shock of death; but the resurrection of the body we should never have dreamed of. He has revealed it to us, and therefore it is not only possible and probable, but absolutely certain. God cannot lie. But we must always remember that there will be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust; and may he grant, for our Saviour Jesus Christ's sake, that you and I may be amongst the just!"

I had walked as far as was convenient to me, when I spoke these last words, and it did not seem likely, if I continued the conversation, that I could have concluded with any thing more forcible. I turned, therefore, suddenly, and took my leave.

About two days after this conversation, as I was walking through my parish to visit the sick, Mr. Grange, whom I met frequently on the road, accosted me unusually, and enquired, if I had heard the news—"What news?" I said, "I have heard none." "About Mr. Sambrook, Sir. He is dead!" replied Mr. Grange. "Mr. Sambrook dead!" I exclaimed, with a mixture of surprize and terror. "God forbid, Sir! I should fear he was scarcely prepared to die; but

God knows best when it is fit, in the exercise of his government of the world, to inflict the blow of death!" "Be that as it may, Sir," said he, "Mr. Sambrook is certainly dead. And now I see that it will give you still greater pain to hear the manner of his death. He used to be your enemy, Sir; and there are too many who would be glad of the misfortunes of an enemy; which you, I perceive, are not." I was, indeed, very much shocked, and betrayed my inward feelings by my outward manner. At the same time I was eager to know more; I desired, and yet feared to be told the rest. A thousand ideas darted through my head, like lightning; but that something tragical was to be told I had no doubt whatever. "He was thrown, Sir," said Mr. Grange, "last night from his chaise-cart, and killed upon the spot." "What?" I said, "Without any preparation? Not a moment spared to ask God to pardon him?" "I am told, Sir," he replied, "that the unfortunate man scarcely breathed, when he was found, which was immediately after the accident." "Let us all take warning, Mr. Grange;" I said, and passed on hastily; for I was deeply affected, and wanted a short time for silent meditation on the judgments of the Almighty disposer of all events.

In the course of my walk I was informed by various persons of all the particulars of Mr.

Sambrook's death. It seems that he had been drinking at a pothouse; and, either from natural good-nature, or stimulated by liquor, had undertaken to convey some people, whom he met there, in his chaise-cart, to the neighbouring parish. Having done this, and having probably drank something more there, and again on his return at another pothouse, he was so far heated as to contend for the lead on a narrow road with a cart of the same description as his own. The wheels of the two carts came in contact with each other; he was thrown forward with violence in consequence of the sudden stop; he fell upon his head; his neck was dislocated; and his death was instantaneous.

My anxiety about him led me to enquire what had been his habits since I began first to converse with him. I think I ascertained that he had been much less frequently at the public-houses; but nobody assigned any other cause of this apparent amendment than the increasing want of money. Whether he was amended in any other respects after his mind had been in some measure enlightened, I cannot tell. On the fatal day of his death he was evidently intoxicated; or a man of his age would never have engaged in so childish and dangerous a contest. As to Church, he had never been there, except at his sister's funeral; although I had expected

it of him, as the proof of his intention to begin a new life.

His death, owing to the awful circumstances of it, and the idea which had got abroad that he had despised my warning voice, made a great noise in the parish. At the funeral there was an immense concourse of people. The distress of the widow and daughters seemed to be beyond all measure. The daughters fainted again and again; the widow was supported by two of her sons, and made several attempts to throw herself into the grave. The church-yard resounded with their screams. This at first astonished me. If these persons had been brought up in religious habits, or were likely to be touched with religious feelings, the scene before them was undoubtedly most affecting and most terrible. A husband, a father, having persisted to the last in a vicious course, and in the utter neglect of his Maker and Redeemer, in spite of the instructions and admonitions of the parish-priest, was now hurled on the sudden by avenging justice, as it might reasonably be feared, into a bitter eternity. But the case with these persons was apparently the reverse, and must be explained in a different manner. And a circumstance, which came soon afterwards to my knowledge, did, I think, sufficiently explain it. Much noise and tumult was heard

within the poor man's premises during the whole evening of the funeral; such as is the consequence of intoxication; and it is more than probable that those who attended the funeral were excited by the force of liquor to that exhibition of excessive grief, with which the sober-minded were shocked and disgusted.

I had an opportunity of discovering afterwards that the sons and daughters had a very inadequate feeling of their father's calamity. They came to me three or four times about the settlement of his debt, which, at length, after another abatement on my part, was finally discharged. At first I feared to wound them to the quick by mentioning his dreadful end; but I soon found that there was no occasion for any delicacy. They were manifestly very little moved by it. However, one or two of them came to Church at intervals in consequence of what I then said to them. The widow, whom I have not been able to see, came once only.

Upon the whole, in closing this history, I cannot but express my hope that others may be more successful in similar cases. One lesson to be learnt is that we must not relax our efforts on the vain notion that we shall have plenty of time because our patient is strong and healthy. Death interposes, and destroys the calculations and the patient together.

CHAPTER III.

MR. MADDOX.—DESPAIR.

One Sunday evening in the summer, as I was strolling in my garden after tea, I was suddenly called to speak to a visitor, who waited for me in the house. It was Mr. Wilkins, a farmer, one of my parishioners.

Having accoste him in the usual manner, he apologized for intruding upon me at such an hour; and then added, that "a very awkward business had happened," (such was his own expression) which had occasioned his visit. I was left in conjecture, what this business might be, which he termed "an awkward one," and in which I concluded, of course, that I was personally concerned; and I begged that he would explain himself. He soon relieved me from all suspence on the subject, by informing me, that Mr. Maddox, a neighbour and friend of his, also a farmer, was at the point of death, and "would not be satisfied without seeing me." Such again was his own expression; and he said moreover.

"that he had attempted to dissuade Mr. Maddox from troubling me, but in vain."

The fact was, that Mr. Wilkins himself was never in his place at Church, and that he had very little, if any, feeling of religion at all; a Christian he could not be reckoned in any sense. The desire, therefore, which Mr. Maddox expressed to see me, appeared no doubt, to Mr. Wilkins, to be a superstitious weakness, or at the best an idle and superstitious notion. However, he could not deny the request of a dying man; but he stated that request to me, in his own manner, and according to his own ideas.

In reply, I began with reg- tting, that he had attempted to dissuade Mr. Maddox from sending for me in such an awful extremity, when I might possibly convey some comfort to him; and I then assured him that, however painful or troublesome the office might be of attending upon the sick and dying, I considered it one of my most essential duties, and should be always ready to perform it, even at an unseasonable hour, and after a fatiguing day; and who knows but that, even in the case of Mr. Maddox, whose life, I said, had been a constant violation of the divine laws, and certainly passed in an apparent disbelief and contempt of the Christian Revelation, still, as he might now entertain different senti-

ments, and repent of his past conduct, which was indicated at least by his wish to see me; who knows but that, by God's mercy, something may yet be done for the salvation of his soul.

Mr. Wilkins made no direct answer to these observations, but seemed wrapped in thought; and as I did not think this a proper opportunity to detain him in conversation, and also expected to meet him again presently, I dismissed him with the promise of following him immediately. Upon my arrival at Mr. Maddox's house, Mr. Wilkins was there; but I saw him only for an instant, and, alas! he had no intention of joining in the awful matters that were about to take place in the sick man's chamber.

Whilst my name was announced, and preparations were made for my reception, I was left alone in the best parlour, which I had abundant opportunity to survey, and which gave evident tokens that it had once been the scene of festivity and joy. All the apparatus of drinking and jollity was to be seen in goodly order; of which a punch-bowl, of large dimensions, was a prominent feature; and several wine glasses had each a lemon suspended in them, as if for immediate use. Meanwhile I learned from the nurse, who came into the room, what I had already begun to conjecture, that jovial "riotous living" had reduced Mr. Maddox to the sad condition in

which he was now lying—"His inside," she said, "was quite worn out."

At length being introduced into the chamber, I saw the sick man at once in his bed; the curtains being all undrawn to give him air. His eyes instantly met mine, being turned to the door at which I entered. There was something very uncommon about them; they were large, beyond the usual size, and protruded far from the hollow sockets; they were restless, and betrayed the consciousness of guilt, suspicion, and fear. Before I was near enough to speak, I observed besides, and was shocked at his whole haggard look, which betokened a rooted grief of mind denying all sleep and rest, rather than bodily pain threatening the extinction of life. The sight was appalling and piteous; and it immediately prescribed the line of my duty. The reed was already bruised, and needed not to be further broken.

Being now arrived at the bed, I began—"I was very sorry, Sir, to hear, as I did for the first time half an hour ago, of your sickness; but I hope things are not so bad, but that you may still live to thank God for his goodness towards you." He shook his head, as one who despaired not of life only, but of God's goodness also.

"What does your doctor think of you?" I enquired, with tenderness. He replied, with

agony, "The doctor says he can do nothing more."

"But what is impossible with man, is possible with God," I said in a solemn devout tone. And good reason I had to say so, fortified by my own experience. At least I had seen several cases, in which the patients, abandoned by the medical men to the ministrations of the Parish Priest, had wonderfully recovered under those auspices; and recovered, alas! in some of those cases, only to relapse into their former sins and follies.

"But what is your own opinion of yourself?" I continued to question him, with the same mildness as before.

He answered quick, and sternly, "I am a dead man, and must go to ——." His meaning was too evident, by his voice and manner, and I interrupted him, before he could express it, by an involuntary exclamation of "God forbid!" He was softened a little; and I began to lament, not as one in anger, but as a person anxious for his welfare, present and future, temporal and eternal, that he had delayed to send for me to so late a period,

"Ah! Sir," he replied, "they would not suffer me to do it. They ridiculed me; they rated me —What? send for a Parson? Belie your principles, from a paltry fear of dying?"

"To die, however," I said, "merely to die, if

death were to terminate every thing, is so contrary to nature, as reasonably to create reluctance and aversion; but as it is at least doubtful whether there may not be an hereafter, to last for ever; and if there be such an hereafter, there must be a state of retribution; your fear, Sir, if you had any fear, was most just and proper; and their freedom from fear, if it was real, was a blind foolhardiness; and if pretended, was no kindness to you,"

"Ah, Sir!" the approach of death let in new light upon me. It was terrible—I could bear it no longer—I determined to send for you, in spite of arguments or jeers. Would that I had done it sooner! It is now too late—I am sure it is."

"I hope not," I said; "your mind has undergone a change, with which God will be pleased; and may we not trust in his infinite mercy, that, having begun a good work in you, he will carry it on to perfection?"

"No, no!" he cried, with a dreadful energy; "there is no room for such a trust. I have sinned beyond redemption. There is no crime which I have not committed; not one, except murder perhaps." And then he stopped, and seemed to be considering whether he had not also been guilty of murder; and at the same time he cast such a look upon me, as if he ex-

pected that after this confession I should skrink from him with horror.

And indeed I was somewhat horror-struck, but prepared to answer in the manner that appeared necessary; when a person, not hitherto mentioned, interposed, and with a confident sort of tone attempted, not exactly to soothe the poor man's fears, but to lessen or extinguish them altogether, by telling him that he was not half so bad as he made himself to be, and that hundreds and thousands were much worse. This person, as I found afterwards, was no other than a kept woman, and she was probably stung to the quick by what Mr. Maddox had said of his own guilt, and not a little alarmed lest he might enter into details of crimes in which she herself was involved. But I was then ignorant of her situation, and had only formed generally a bad opinion of her, from her dress, and from her whole appearance and manner. At all events her remark, pronounced too in such a tone, was not to be passed over in silence; not that it seemed to make any impression for an instant upon the sick man; but for her own instruction, and to fortify him in his present feelings of self-abasement and unworthiness.

I said threfeore, "You are not acting a kind and friendly part towards Mr. Maddox, in talking after that fashion. He appears to have a

much juster sense of his own condition, and humbles himself very properly under the hand of the Almighty. He knows very well that it cannot make any difference to him, how many persons there may be in the world worse than himself. He will be judged by his own works, and not by the works of others. And think you that God cannot punish many as easily as few; or that, like weak men, he will be compelled to select a few of the most guilty to suffer punishment instead of the whole mass? Remember the destruction of Sodom; remember the Flood. But you say that Mr. Maddox is not half so bad as he makes himself to be. Alas! alas! we are all bad enough to be guilty in the sight of God, who is of purer eyes than to behold with complacency any sort of iniquity. We are all, therefore, bad enough to expect from God's justice everlasting misery; and without doubt this would be the doom of us all, if our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ had not done what he has for us."

At the name of the Saviour, the sick man exclaimed, with the look and the voice of despair, "That Saviour is no Saviour for me!"

"Do you believe in him?" I asked, with eagerness. "I do;" he answered at once. "I believe in God; and I believe in Jesus Christ; and I believe in the Holy Ghost; and I believe

in all that I was taught and read in the Bible in my younger days—but I believe, like the devils, only to tremble—I am a devil myself."

The manner in which he pronounced all this was quite indescribable. The certainty of perishing for ever haunted his mind without ceasing. The mercy of God through Christ was utterly intercepted from his eye by a thick dark cloud—he saw him only armed with the thunderbolt. Not a tear was shed; not a groan was uttered. His air was that of a man fixed, determined, resolute to die without hope. I was in deep dismay, and about to relinquish the distressing task, as vain; but I said, "if you believe in Jesus Christ, you believe that he is able to save."—"Yes," he answered. "And not to save you?" I continued. He was struck, and hesitated. I endeavoured to gain ground, and said, "he is indeed mighty to save; and it would be a most unworthy notion of him, to suppose, that his power was limited to this or that person, to this or that crime."

Resuming his obduracy, however, after so short an interval, the sick man in haste replied, "able to save, but not willing."

"Oh, yes!" I resumed, "he is most willing, as he is most able, to do it. The Scripture tells us so; he tells us so himself—'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.'—'Come

unto me, all ye that travail, and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest.'—'Them that come unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' But I will read to you the 15th chapter of St. Luke's Gospel," I said, "that you may see more clearly how much all the blessed inhabitants of heaven rejoice in mercy, and how much they wish to save. Give me the Bible," I said to the woman. She looked surprised, and ashamed; and then she pretended to search for it.

"This is no time for deceit," said the sick man. "We have no Bible here, Sir. Every verse would condemn us. We have cast off the Bible; and now the God of the Bible has cast off us."

I took my own Bible from my pocket. "Oh! Sir," he cried, "show me not that book! I have disobeyed it; I have vilified it; I have driven it from my house, with scorn and hatred. The sight of it cuts me to the heart."

"This holy book alone," I said, "shews us the way to eternal life. It does indeed affirm and prove that we are all sinners; but it does so, that abandoning all righteousness of our own, we may seek after the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ. Is it possible that those sweet and heavenly sentences, which I repeated to you a few minutes ago out of this book, and which so strikingly describe the whole gracious

object of the Gospel, did not pierce to your very soul, and produce there unutterable comfort and peace, to which it has been so long a stranger? But hear the three parables." I then proceeded to read them; and, as I went along, I interspersed such comments, upon various passages, as were most suitable to his case. I dwelt especially upon the joy of the angels over a recovered sinner; and upon that most touching and consolatory representation of the father, beholding his repentant son, whilst he was yet afar off; compassionating his misery at once; and hastening to meet him with all the ardour and all the signs of paternal love. "Let this," I said, "sink deep into your heart; and assure yourself, beyond all doubt, that God always waits to be gracious; that he sees, and hails, and favourably receives the very first symptoms of sorrow and remorse, when the sinner begins to come to himself, and to the knowledge of his real condition; that he sends his Holy Spirit, if we pray for him, to improve these good beginnings; to root out the old affections, and to implant new ones; and to ripen our sorrow and remorse into a true repentance and amendment of life; and that all this time our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ is interceding for us, giving effect to our prayers, and pleading on our behalf the merits of his own sufferings and death."

Mr. Maddox did not once interrupt me. He was silent, but not listless. It was evident, however, that the storm was not allayed. I had said, "Peace; be still;" but the calm, which I wished, had not yet succeeded to my words. He had not addressed, aloud at least, a single petition to Heaven; he had not ejaculated a single cry for pardon; he had not beat his breast, like the Publican, or said, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Nevertheless I was somewhat elevated with hope, and went on in this manner.

"You perceive now, Sir, that there is no want of willingness to save in those who are also mighty to save; there is, moreover, no exclusion of nations, or of individuals, however wicked; be they who they may, if they will come to God through Christ, they will be saved to the uttermost. What is it then that excludes *you?* Your sins? We have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God. The greatness of your sins? Be they red like scarlet, they shall be white as snow. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."

I stopped, wishing him to speak; and that I might discover whether any, or what sort of impression had now been made upon him. He was still silent; but I considered it as somewhat gained, that he did not attempt to argue with me, or to controvert my doctrine; or to state

any reasons which might make that doctrine inapplicable to himself. If he had but asked me to pray with him, or for him, (and I had given him intentionally an opening to do so,) I should have been greatly encouraged. But the idea of praying seemed never to occur to him. It was high time therefore for *me* to propose it. Could he but be brought to pray, I thought, God's blessing might yet descend upon him. I said therefore at once, not meaning to allow him any opportunity of objecting, "I will now kneel down and pray with you. Every thing may be done by prayer, and nothing without it." I knelt immediately on the floor by the bed-side. Some one was bringing me a cushion; but I refused it, saying, "that the floor was good enough for the best of us." It is possible that this little circumstance was not without its effect upon the sick man. It gave him perhaps an opinion of my zeal and earnestness in his cause; and also he might have thought, that by thus lowering myself, I shewed that I did not imagine myself to be at such a distance from him as he was disposed to put himself in his own estimation. He said, however, "Oh! good Sir, I cannot pray with you. My lips have been long unused to prayer—but you may pray for me, if you please."—"I will," I replied; "and may God prosper my prayer."

I then began the prayer for persons troubled in mind or in conscience, which is to be found at the end of the service for the Visitation of the Sick; but my own situation was so momentous, and that of the sick man so peculiar and so critical, that I was interrupted every instant by the overpowering force of my own feelings; tears and sobs burst forth, and precluded all utterance; yet I did not cease altogether until I had reached the conclusion; then rising upon my legs, I said, "I will see you again to-morrow—God bless you!"

It was now grown dark, and I was myself too much affected to watch the emotions of my patient; but it was manifest that he was warmed with a sudden glow of gratitude towards me, whatever other effect might have been produced; for he followed me with his eyes, and replied with energy to my benediction, "And may God bless *you!* God *will* bless you."

These sounds were most delightful to my ears; and I hastened home, consoling myself with the thought, that my own distress of mind, which had prevented me from proceeding any further with the sick man at that moment, might have been perhaps, by God's blessing, more efficacious than a thousand arguments.

Having slept but ill, I rose so much the sooner on the following day, and returned with the sun

to Mr. Maddox's house. Indeed not a moment was now to be lost; for though to myself his end seemed yet at a distance, I was confidently assured that it was fast approaching. During the night I had ruminated upon our past conversation, and had revolved in my thoughts all the probable arguments that might yet be urged, if the conversation were renewed, and continued in the same strain; and many texts and facts of Scripture had occurred to me, which were suitable to my purpose of soothing and tranquillizing a troubled guilty mind; but my meditations were of little use to me on the present occasion.

I was admitted immediately. The poor man was lying upon his bed, not in it. The night had been a terrible one to him, both to his body and to his mind. His body had been convulsed again and again; his mind perpetually harrowed with the anticipations of eternal woe. Well had he verified the saying of the prophet, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." He had been too, for a short time, delirious; yet he appeared to have much strength remaining. He raised himself up without assistance, and sat upon the end of his bed, supporting himself by his hands and arms; and soon he sunk back again,

finding the posture inconvenient and painful. Yet he tried it repeatedly, and returned as often to the horizontal position, without appearing to find rest or relief in either. A dark gloom hung upon his brow; his eyes were still stern, and unsoftened by a single tear; nor did he greet me, as I fondly fancied he would, with even the faintest smile of satisfaction at my arrival.

What was now to be done? I expressed, with tenderness, my fears that he had passed a bad night; to which he answered simply, "bad indeed." I then said, "that we were all of us in the hands of God, and that we must submit with patience, and resign ourselves calmly to his will." He did not speak, but looked, as if he yielded to a force which was irresistible, and not to a wisdom and goodness, which were infinite. I next endeavoured to draw his mind this way, by saying, that "amidst all God's severity, his goodness was still evident in permitting him to have the use of his mental faculties; so that even now, in this great extremity, he might pray to God with understanding, and pass the present moments at least in trying to be reconciled to him, and to obtain pardon and peace, before he went hence, and was no more seen. And what way," I said, "so proper for this end, as prayer? Last night we concluded with prayer; this morning we will begin with it."

He was quite passive. I kneeled down therefore, and continued, "I will choose for you a prayer of King David. He was a man, you know, after God's own heart, in the times of his low fortune, and his adversity. It pleased God to try him with prosperity, riches and power. He raised him to a throne, and crowned him with victories and conquests. But David was unable to digest this exalted greatness. He was corrupted by fame, and pomp, and luxury, and power; and his passions and appetites got the better of his reason and his religion. He seduced the beautiful and beloved wife of his neighbour; and, that he might conceal and enjoy his crime, he put into practice the basest frauds and artifices, which ended in his neighbour's death. To speak plainly, therefore, he was guilty of adultery and murder; two sins, the foulest, the blackest, the most enormous, which God has forbidden in the ten commandments. He committed those sins too, at a period of his life, when he could not plead in his excuse the force of youthful passion; for he was now in a manner grown old and grey in the service of his God."

Mr. Maddox appeared to be deeply attentive to this story of David, which was probably in some respects not unlike his own; and for a while his pain, both bodily and mental, was for-

gotten; but he made no observation. I went on therefore, and said, "Let us now see what were the feelings of this great sinner, when he became at last conscious of the horrors of his situation, and spurned himself with indignation and shame for having so eagerly and so wickedly pursued the transient gratification of his sensual, brutal appetites. Let us see what he thought of himself, and how he prayed to God for pardon—and, remember, he *was* pardoned."

I then repeated the 51st Psalm, looking up now and then to see if it produced a favourable effect, and if the dying man joined in it. I could not perceive that he did; at least his lips never moved. To induce him therefore to speak something indicatory of the present state of his mind, I commented briefly upon the Psalm, and said, "Thus did David pray, and thus did he humble himself before God; and because he was sincere, God forgave him. And why may not God be equally merciful to *you*, for Jesus Christ's sake?"

Collecting all his strength, he replied to my question; "David was sincere, you tell me; and he lived to show it. How can I answer for myself at such a moment? What time will be spared me to give any proof of my sincerity by a new life? I shall be a dead man perhaps in a few hours."

"But God knows," I said, "the very inmost

thoughts of your heart. He knows also whether any good resolutions, which you might now form, assisted by his Holy Spirit, would be afterwards fulfilled. He knows whether you would persevere in well-doing, if he were to spare your life and prolong it; and knowing all this, he will accept a proper will for the deed itself. Did not Jesus Christ pardon the penitent thief on the very cross? The thief was stained, we may suppose, with every crime; but in the midst of torture and death, he believed and trusted in a dying Saviour; and he bore witness to his sincerity by every act then in his power. His blessed Saviour, therefore, satisfied no doubt of his entire change of heart, acknowledged him at once for his own, and cheered him with that great unexpected promise of receiving him into Paradise. This is recorded for our comfort and instruction; not that we should spend our lives in sin, with the intention of repenting at last, and with the hope of obtaining the thief's reward at so cheap a cost; (for God will assuredly avenge himself on all who reason in this manner, and will defeat their monstrous purposes) but it is recorded, that no man may despair under any circumstances; and that we may know, that whilst a breath of life remains, there is a possibility of pardon and salvation."

"Ah! Sir," he exclaimed, "if my life were to

be spared, (which cannot be) might not the same thoughts and the same desires return, as my strength returned? Would not the same companions get about me, as before; and ridicule my past fears, and my present temperance; and laugh me again into my former vices? Oh! I have too long been unused to all goodness; every act of it would be strange and uneasy to me. And will God pardon and reward such a temper as mine? I cannot hope it—I am lost for ever."

Before I could reply, the exertions of the poor man to say all this, and his anguish of mind, had completely exhausted him; and a convulsion followed. I did not stay to witness this terrific scene, for which indeed I wanted strength of nerve. I speeded homewards; intending to return after breakfast—but alas! as I heard soon afterwards, in that convulsion he breathed his last.

Such was the divine will! Whether he were in a state of salvation, or not, when he died, God did not vouchsafe so far to bless my defective ministrations as that he should die in peace; an awful reflection for the minister and for the people! Who is sufficient for a due discharge of his spiritual duties in such trying difficult scenes? What sinner will tempt God to shut up from him his tender mercies to the very end?

It is awful, too, most awful to reflect upon the sad history of some of the wretched man's companions, who survived him, and who reproached him in his misery for desiring the assistance of a Clergyman. Mr. Stanton, touched for a short period by the fate of Mr. Maddox, sent his children to church, but was ashamed to come there himself; and finally, abandoning himself to drinking and intoxication, was cut down in an instant by a fit of apoplexy, not having the power to do what his friend had done, even if he wished it; not having a moment spared him for a religious act or thought. As he returned one night from the tavern, no sooner had he knocked at his own door, than he fell down dead. He went from his cups straight to judgment.

The end of Mr. Chatteris was still more dreadful. Worn out with perpetual drunkenness, when his last sickness overtook him, it pleased God to deprive him of his reason. I saw him, but to no purpose. He had spectres of terror continually before his eyes, and curses upon his tongue. Whenever the windows of his chamber were open, his ravings and imprecations were heard by those who passed by; and thus he died, without a single beam of mental light to warn him of the horrors of his condition.

Mr. Stamford died less fearfully, and after having received the sacrament of the Lord's

body and blood. I administered it to him when he was in the last agony; but I have never heard that he had been previously at church, or that he had performed before any religious act whatever. I was sent for to him very early in the morning, and found him already speechless. Yet he still possessed his faculties, and made known to me by signs his wish to partake of the bread and wine, with which I at once complied; and he died immediately afterwards.

Mr. Burton, the last whom I shall mention, married the kept woman of his friend. He is still living, but in the greatest indigence; reduced to want by his vices. He still lives, however; and God grant that he may repent!

CHAPTER IV.

OLD MR. BROOM.—PARENTAL ANGER.

One morning, as I was walking according to custom through my parish, I met the apothecary, who informed me that Mr. Broom was in the most imminent danger; that medicine, which had been unsuccessful from the beginning, was now become hopeless; and that the whole family laboured under the greatest anxiety and alarm, lest he might die without being reconciled to his son.

I turned my footsteps in the direction of his house, with the intention of doing every thing in my power to accomplish this desirable object; and having a mile to walk, I had abundant time to reflect upon all the arguments and motives which appeared likely to be forcible and effectual at such an awful moment. Indeed, as I was perfectly acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, it had engaged my consideration very often before; but I had never yet met with such an opportunity of opening the subject to

the sick man, as gave me a fair prospect of success.

In fact, this son had used him so ill in various ways, that it demanded the full exercise of the most difficult Christian virtues, even in a father, to banish all exasperated feelings, and to pronounce pardon and forgiveness. Mr. Broom was now very far advanced in age, and had passed the utmost limit assigned by our fine burial Psalm to the life of man; he was upwards of fourscore years. In his younger days, and up to a late period, he had never known pecuniary distress. For the last few years, in consequence of his son's mismanagement, he had been utterly unable to discharge, with punctuality, the usual demands upon his fortune. His own comforts were necessarily abridged; hospitality, in which he delighted, was entirely at an end; poverty seemed to hang over the close of his existence. All this, being justly attributed to his son, he had never spoken to me about him without marking, in the strongest terms, his abhorrence of his son's conduct. I believe, indeed, that the impossibility which he felt of subduing his angry passions, in that particular respect, had lately occasioned on his part a neglect of public worship in the parish church, where in former times he had been a regular attendant; and although he had been prevailed upon to receive the Sacra-

ment of the Lord's Supper at home during his sickness, yet the hostile workings of his mind towards his son had prevented him from reaping that degree of comfort and satisfaction from it, which might otherwise have been reasonably expected.

These were the circumstances under which a last effort was now to be made,

As I approached the gate of a small garden in the front of his house, the windows being open for air, his moanings reached my ears. His pains had been long, and were dreadfully severe. I was deeply affected, and almost in despair, as to my own power of fulfilling my errand with the requisite courage and ability. I prayed silently for help from above.

At the door I was met by two of his married daughters, who had seen me coming, and were ready to admit me. They were shedding tears profusely, which added to my distress; but at once they exclaimed, (for that was the thought nearest to their hearts,) "Oh! Sir, our father will die! The doctor has given him up, and our brother is not forgiven!" This was followed by deep sobbings and fresh tears.

"Is your brother himself desirous of being forgiven?" I said. "Oh! yes, Sir!" they answered immediately; "he has been here, again and again; but his father refuses to see him. Indeed,

"God be praised!" I exclaimed, pressing his hand eagerly, and with an emotion which added, no doubt, to the efficacy of my words, "God be praised for working this change in your heart!" But soon recovering myself, and following the advantage that was gained, I proposed to send immediately for young Mr. Broom, that he might hear himself this joyful declaration of pardon from his father's own lips.

But he stopped me at once, and said, "Oh, no! I cannot see him! I have no wish to see him! I forgive him! Let that be enough!"

"Alas! alas! I replied, it cannot be enough, even to satisfy your own mind, to prepare you to meet your God with a perfect peace and tranquillity of soul. Much less can it satisfy your friends, your family, your once prodigal, but now afflicted, penitent son, who waits hourly at your door with tears and entreaties, that he may be admitted to your sick bed; that he may throw himself upon his knees before you; that he may receive from your own mouth forgiveness and happiness."

"I wish him all happiness, from my heart," said Mr. Broom, catching my last word, and still dreadfully averse from any thought of seeing his son.

"But how will he be assured of this, my good Sir, if you refuse him his just and natural desire,

of seeing you; of confessing his own unworthiness before you; of asking pardon of you in his own person; of hearing you bless him with your expiring breath? Can he have any certainty of conviction in his own mind, that you have indeed forgiven him, and that you have sincerely prayed to God to bless and prosper him whilst you thus continue to cast him out of your presence? Will he not go down himself with sorrow to the grave; conscious, as he must be, that he has embittered your last days, and necessarily fearful that a father's curse will still cling to him, unless he both sees and hears you, before you depart for ever, in the delightful act of reconciliation and returning love? Ah, my good old friend! Pray to God to help you to secure the astonishing peace and satisfaction of mind which such conduct will give you. Pray to God to enable you to obtain this the hardest of all victories, this victory over yourself!"

He was touched, but he hesitated in silence. I too was silent. At length he said, "Spare me this new pain; the sight of him will kill me at once."—His words were mingled with groans.

I was reduced for a moment to despair, and about to retire from the battle; but rousing myself once more and finally, I renewed the charge in the following manner.

"I came here, Mr. Broom, to join my prayers with your own, that it would please God of his gracious goodness to release you from your sufferings; but I see now too well the cause of those sufferings, and, I see also that the purpose of them is not fulfilled; and therefore I cannot pray that they should yet be terminated. Sometimes the ways of Providence are dark and mysterious; but here his own finger is strikingly manifest. He is severe, but he is most mercifully severe. Had it been possible to save your soul without this protracted bodily pain, no doubt, at the age of eighty-five years, you would have fallen spontaneously, as it were, like the mellow fruit from the tree; or you would have been gathered to your ancestors, like the shock of wheat, that cometh in, in its season. But it could not be.—Had you died so, you would have gone to meet *Him*, who came to make peace between God and you, with hatred in your heart; and you could not have stood before him. Behold then the infinite unspeakable mercy of Heaven! God scourges; for thus alone could he effectually heal. He inflicts pain, agonising pain; he prolongs it; he increases it; beyond what your advanced age might seem to be able to endure. The great act, for which he does so, he still puts into your own power. Oh! justify his do-

ings by performing it; and then may you depart in peace, and in his favour!"

"Ah!" he cried, "let it be as you will—Let my son be called."

What were the feelings of the old man at this instant I do not know: mine were overpowered, and floods of tears gushed forth from my eyes. I was wound up to the highest pitch by the length of the exertion, by the uncertainty of the result, by the magnitude of the interest at stake; and now that the whole was suddenly crowned with success, I could bear it no longer. I kissed his hand with ardour, started from my seat, and rushed to the door. There I found the daughters and the servant, with streaming eyes and clasped hands, thanking heaven. They had heard all, and they showered their blessings upon me.

Search was immediately made for young Mr. Broom; he was not to be found.

Ah! thought I, Providence will not always indulge our waywardness. This youth, who seeks a place for repentance with sighs and tears, cannot now find it; and this aged man, who, after the most painful struggle, has at last conquered himself, will not enjoy his victory.

However, it pleased God to decree otherwise. Young Mr. Broom arrived before it was

too late. The scene was pathetic in the extreme. He threw himself at his dying father's feet, and scarcely rose from that humiliating posture till his father had breathed his last sigh. The trying interval was but short. The good Providence of God seemed to verify the account which I had given of it, afflicting only to save, and withdrawing the rod when the heart was changed.

I retraced my steps homewards, buried in deep thought upon the interesting and awful circumstances which had just passed; and at times glowing with inward delight and with gratitude to God for the noble opportunity of doing good with which my sacred office had furnished me, and which I would not have exchanged at that moment for rank, or wealth, or power.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. ATKINSON AND MRS. BRERETON.—BAPTISM.

SECTION I.

MRS. ATKINSON.

This Lady had been born and bred up amongst the Quakers; but, having married a Presbyterian without the permission of the congregation to which she had belonged, she was excluded from the fraternity altogether. From that time she attached herself to the Presbyterian forms of worship, and constantly frequented a Chapel of that sect in her immediate neighbourhood. Meanwhile a numerous family sprung up, especially of daughters; the eldest of whom accompanied their mother to her Chapel; but it was understood that in matters of religion they were to choose entirely for themselves. This was the wish of both their parents; their father was no bigot to his sect, but an advocate for perfect freedom of conscience; their mother, not

having been brought up in Presbyterianism, had no hereditary predilection for it. The consequence was, that the daughters, having become acquainted with the then Curate of the parish, a man of zeal and ability in his profession, were gradually brought to be Churchwomen, upon principle and conviction; and they received the Sacrament of Baptism, when they were now arrived at years of discretion. The rest of the family followed their example in coming to Church; but Mrs. Atkinson, at the time of my settlement in the parish, had not herself been yet baptized; although she had partaken with the utmost regularity and devotion of the other Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, both here in the country, and in London, where she resided during the winter-months. The Curate had been consulted from time to time on this very point; indeed Mrs. Atkinson had previously informed him of her situation before she presented herself for the first time at the holy table; but the thing went on from year to year without any decision being taken upon it. Upon the whole it might seem that he did not consider Baptism as necessary in her circumstances. She had indeed all the essential practical principles of the Christian religion in their full operation upon her life and manners; and this he might have thought sufficient.

However, Mrs. Atkinson fell sick; and in that condition, so calculated for serious reflection on the past, and an anxious looking forward into futurity, she reverted in her thoughts to the subject of Baptism, and desired her daughters to consult me about it. They did so; and I gave my opinion immediately and at once, that the ceremony, under all the circumstances of the case, was both expedient and necessary. On the following day it happened that I saw the Bishop of the Diocese; and he having concurred with me in the same opinion, and also having furnished me with full powers to act upon it, I waited only for a favourable moment.

The reasons for their mother's baptism, which I assigned to the young ladies in my conversation with them, were substantially as follows. "It seems clear," I said, "in the first place, whatever the Quakers may allege to the contrary, that the New Testament represents Baptism as essentially necessary to all; allowing merely what must always be allowed in cases of positive commands; our Saviour's command to his Disciples was, that they should go and baptize all nations; and he added, that they, who believed and were baptized, should be saved. He told Nicodemus, that no man could enter into the kingdom of God, unless he were born again of water and of the Spirit. After

his departure, the Apostles acted upon this principle; all their converts were immediately baptized, and to those who were touched with their preaching, and earnestly enquired what they must do to be saved, they answered universally, repent and be baptized. Cornelius, the Centurion, is a striking instance. He was a man who was already in the actual practice of the Christian virtues; and the Holy Ghost was also communicated to him in an extraordinary manner; yet was he baptized afterwards, before they accounted him a partaker of the Christian covenant.

"The order then was general, and the obedience to it was general also; insomuch that even children were baptized, probably by the Apostles themselves, but certainly by their successors, and during all the first ages of Christianity; and it is almost inconceivable, when a thing is so clearly and positively ordained, that men should begin at length to sophisticate about it, and to find reasons for evading and neglecting it. However, they did this; and a sect arose, which denied the necessity of baptism, in the case of children when born of Christian parents; affirming that the children were sanctified by the parents, and needed nothing more.

"This appears to me to be very absurd. We know nothing at all about children being sanc-

tified by their parents, so as to make baptism unnecessary; but it seems plain enough in Scripture, that all are required to be baptized; and, if we were mistaken in this notion, no harm could result from our acting upon it; whereas a mistake on the other side might be followed by terrible consequences. In short, wherever there is a command, or substantial reasons for thinking so, it ought to be obeyed, and the rest must be left to God. It argues a great want of humility, and a foolish desire of modelling every thing according to our own ideas, and indeed of setting up our own scanty ideas against infinite wisdom, if we do not take, as we find, that which is proved to come from heaven. Suppose we could discover no use whatever in baptism; yet what of that? The command remains the same; Go ye and baptize all nations; repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission of sins. To controvert this; and to attempt to draw a line; and to say that it is applicable to one and not to another; is unquestionably a great want of Christian meekness, and docility; and of wisdom too. For what is to be gained by omitting the ceremony? Is it not as simple as any ceremony can be, and quite remote from any thing superstitious? No one mistakes it so much as to suppose that it will operate like a charm;

but we may well suppose that it will be accompanied by God's grace and benediction.

"But perhaps it will be said, that baptism consisting of two parts, the outward and the inward; the inward part, sanctification by the Spirit, is all that is essential, and that this constitutes the whole of regeneration; so that if a person be sanctified by the Spirit, that person is regenerate, and stands in need of no sprinkling with water. This may be all very subtle and ingenious; but Jesus Christ says, that we must be born of the water, and of the Spirit. He makes no distinctions with respect to the one, and the other. He does not tell us, that one is the symbol, and the other the thing signified; and consequently that one is sufficient, and that the other may be neglected. This is the invention of men, who would always be wise above what is written. Besides, how are we to know that any person is sanctified by the Spirit, so as to be sufficiently qualified for eternity, and entitled to neglect any ordinance of Scripture? We can only judge by the fruits, which shew themselves in the life of that person; a very vague criterion indeed for us mortals, who are so blind, and so easily deceived! And of this I am sure, that the very best Christians are so far from entertaining such a favourable opinion of themselves, that they would be

rather disposed to disclaim every thing, than to pretend that they might safely break the least of God's commandments.

"The same reasoning will apply more strongly to all, who might assume, that, because they have habitually complied with a more important ordinance, they may therefore omit the less important, as they will call the one and the other. In fact, we know nothing about more or less important. Every ordinance is enjoined for our good, whether we are aware of the particular good, or not; and we cannot pick and choose this or that, just as we may think of their several uses; but we must fulfil all, with an entire prostration of every faculty to the supreme Ruler of the world.

"In the case of your excellent mother, it is manifest that the ceremony would be a comfort to her. She has considered the matter, and taken advice upon it repeatedly; and her present anxiety is a proof, that she does not acquiesce in the advice formerly given. I feel confident too, that, with her good understanding, she cannot be actuated by superstitious motives. And who knows, but that a gracious God, pleased to see his commands conscientiously obeyed, may bless the ceremony in an extraordinary manner, and pour down upon her such an abundant measure of his grace, as may

enable her to support the approach of death with an unshaken fortitude, and to look into the blissful realms beyond with unutterable joy."

These arguments and explanations were more than sufficient to persons already predisposed to adopt my opinion; and Mrs. Atkinson having been made acquainted with them, as well as also with the Bishop's concurrence, and her disorder appearing to increase; I was soon afterwards suddenly sent for at night, and admitted into her bed-chamber to perform the ceremony.

The scene was very striking, and interesting. The daughters surrounded the sick-bed; the younger melted into tears, with the thought of losing a beloved mother; the elder firm and composed, by the conviction that her spirit was about to ascend to heaven. The sick lady herself, perfectly tranquil and placid, patience and resignation beaming forth from every feature of her pallid countenance, lay supported by pillows, in a state of complete weakness and exhaustion; yet, when she saw me, she attempted to speak; but her words were too faintly uttered to admit of their being understood. This was a great loss. She was a good woman; and was now upon the confines, as it were, of the two worlds; and might look into both, and give us

an edifying account of the vanity of the one, and the solidity of the other.

I entreated her not to fatigue herself unnecessarily with any endeavour to converse with me; especially as I was satisfied as to her fitness in every respect for the sacred rite about to be celebrated; I knew that she believed, and that her practice, allowing for human infirmity, was correspondent to her belief. Considering the case as one of urgency, I used my discretion in shortening the forms; and having soon concluded, I kissed her hand, and withdrew. Her conduct throughout was not like that of an inhabitant of earth, but of heaven, to which she seemed already to belong. She lived, however, for a considerable period afterwards, sometimes better, sometimes worse; and having been removed from my parish for a change of air, she died at a distance from me, and is now, I trust, amongst the blessed spirits above.

SECTION II.

MRS. BRERETON.

Not having observed Mrs. Brereton at Church for several Sundays, and having enquired of the pew-openers, if they knew the cause of her absence; I was informed that she had been ill, and was gone into the country, to a more retired and quiet place, to try the effect of a change of air and scene. Her situation, although she had no children of her own, was a responsible and laborious one, as she was the wife of a master-manufacturer, who had many apprentices in his family; her constitution was delicate, and our climate relaxing. The change, however, as I learned in the evening of the same day, had done no good; and she was returned, as they supposed, to die at home; all hope of saving her life having vanished. In fact, her disorder was a rapid decline.

It was rapid indeed, and brought to my mind very forcibly the extreme uncertainty of human things. I had seen her, no long time ago, in the full enjoyment of youth and health; her person was beautiful, and her manners correspondently pleasing. This added to the seriousness of my meditations, and to my commiseration of her

present circumstances; but God knows best how to govern his own world, and he is as merciful as he is wise. I was shocked; but I reposed in *him.*

No message had been sent to summon me to the sick bed; but I was impatient to do something in so extraordinary a case; being confident, indeed, from my general experience, that even a few words, and still more a prayer, might be a comfort and consolation to her in her last moments. In truth, it was but my usual practice, in less striking cases, to call unsummoned at the houses of sick persons; and, having ascertained the state of their health, if I saw an opening for any thing further, to proffer my official assistance.

I did so now. My first interview was with Mr. Brereton's cousin, who was watching over the manufactory, during the necessary attendance of the poor husband himself in his wife's sick chamber. He informed me immediately that Mrs. Brereton had been brought up a Baptist; that since her residence here she had been a regular attendant at my Church, although not at the altar; and that probably she would have continued steadily in communion with us, had it not been for her sickness, which had brought her own family about her; and thus revived her former persuasions. "And this was the reason,

Sir," he said, "why my brother has not sent to you. His situation is one of great delicacy. He is very averse from all interference with the religious opinions and practices of his wife; and he is besides unwilling to give any offence to her mother, and other relations."

It was unreasonable to object to this statement; and I therefore merely asked whether any Baptist Minister was in attendance upon her. "I think not," was his answer. "Some time ago, a man of eminence in that sect, an inhabitant of the neighbouring parish, came to visit her, at the desire of her family; but he seems to have discontinued his visits now, when I should suppose she might want them most; and my brother is much disconcerted with his apparent negligence."

Under these circumstances of absolute spiritual destitution, I thought it my duty to offer my services, both to pray with her, and to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; and I desired to see Mr. Brereton himself, to converse with him on the subject, if it were possible. In a short time he came to me; but he seemed extremely reluctant to embrace my proposal; he expected, as he said, the Baptist Minister, that very day; and he thought his wife so ill, and so little in possession of her faculties at that moment, having just recovered from a convulsive

fit, that he deemed her incapable of any religious act whatever.

It was difficult for me to interfere further; especially as the Baptist Minister was said to be coming, under whose charge her family had placed her. However, I prolonged the conversation, talking about the opinions of the Baptists; and then, to my amazement, I discovered that this poor dying lady had never been baptized at all. "What?" I asked, expressing my sorrow and surprise by my tone and manner; "is it possible, that she should have been permitted to approach so nearly to the close of her existence, and that no provision should have been made for the performance of the holy rite of baptism?"

"The Baptists," said Mr. Brereton, "do not seem to value that ordinance, as we do."—"Alas!" I continued, "there is so much fluctuation in the principles of almost all the sectaries, that you scarcely know what they are at any particular moment. The distinction of the Baptists from the other sects used to be, not that they omitted baptism, but that they administered it to persons of riper age, and by a complete immersion in water. In this case, it is needless to argue about the propriety of infant baptism. Poor Mrs. Bereton must be allowed to be of riper age, and fully prepared for the

ceremony, both by her knowledge, and by her life and habits. And surely they cannot require a complete immersion, when it is physically impossible, or when death might be the consequence. Do they think it so essential, that the sacrament would be void without it? Or what mode have they adopted for the sick, lest they should die unbaptized? Although it is very certain that a complete immersion was the usual practice, where there was abundance of water for the purpose; yet it is by no means certain that it was considered indispensable. On the contrary, it is scarcely credible that the three thousand persons converted on the day of Pentecost could have been baptized in that manner; and, in the case of a single family, that of Cornelius for example, the expression would naturally lead us to suppose that water was brought into the apartment where the family was assembled. St. Peter seeing the Holy Ghost bestowed upon them, exclaimed eagerly, 'Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?' I feel confident, therefore, in my own mind, that these persons were all baptized, by pouring water upon them, and not by dipping them. Undoubtedly, 'to dip,' is the true sense of the expression, 'to baptise;' and such a practice was extremely easy, where there were rivers or lakes, or baths, at hand; and also perfectly

safe, in a hot climate, where bathing was in consequence a familiar custom of the people. But baptism must have been administered again and again, where immersion was impossible; and in our cold climate it would in general be positively dangerous. It is indeed a known fact, (I know the fact myself,) that persons have died in this country in consequence of diseases caught by immersion. Upon the whole, therefore, the present practice amongst ourselves of sprinkling only, is both necessary, and reasonable, and not inconsistent, as a symbol, with the end proposed. Thus, Sir, I have taken some pains to explain the matter to you; because I think it of the utmost importance, that the administration of this holy rite to Mrs. Brereton should not be delayed; and in order to justify you in proposing it to the Baptist Minister, if he should come, or to herself, if he should not; for I am sure you must yourself be anxious, under such afflicting circumstances, to escape the pang, which you might hereafter feel, if she departed hence without having been admitted into the Christian covenant." I studiously abstained from saying any thing about the legality of ministers.

Mr. Brereton, whatever might have been his former lukewarmness, was roused by these arguments; and he thanked me cordially for the great interest which I shewed for his poor wife

and himself, and agreed to act according to my advice. I therefore took my leave for the present, and promised to call on the following day; regretting, however, that a whole day might thus be lost; and not without fears that another opportunity might never occur.

Arriving the next day according to my engagement, I found that Mrs. Brereton was still worse, and that the Minister of her sect had not been with her. This seemed to me quite unaccountable; as I had always supposed that the Dissenters were particularly diligent in their attentions to the sick; and indeed that one cause of their popularity above the established Clergy, had been the apparent superior zeal, which they displayed, in communicating with their flocks. However, this Gentleman not having come forward in a time of need, it became now decidedly my duty, as being the lawful Parish Priest, to press more authoritatively the suggestions of yesterday, and to offer myself for their immediate execution.

Mr. Brereton still hesitated. His wife, he said, had fainted again to-day through exhaustion; and was now lying apparently more dead than alive. He had attempted to read to her, but she seemed not to listen; and if he put a question to her, she sometimes returned an in-

coherent answer. From all which he argued, that nothing could now be done.

I enquired if he had found a convenient opportunity of mentioning my call to her. He replied that he had, and that she desired I would accept her thanks for it; and moreover, that she expressed a wish to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, upon which she had heard me preach once or twice. With respect to baptism, having gently insinuated my remarks upon it, she made no observation at the time, and has been since incapable, in consequence of a paroxysm of her disorder.

There was undoubtedly some difficulty in my way beyond what appeared; and I began to fear that I should not be able to discover and remove it, so as to be of use to this poor lady, who had deeply engaged my interest. Miss Brereton being present to-day, and entering into the conversation, I renewed all the arguments of yesterday; and having stated, with all the force in my power, the presumptuousness, as it appeared to me, of looking for the Christian salvation without a compliance with the Christian ordinances, and more especially the initiatory one. I added, that in case of death without baptism, I did not see, how I could legally perform the last sad and solemn rite of burial. My practice

had been not to enquire into these matters, but to suppose that every thing had been correctly done. Here, however, the fact of non-baptism was accidentally made known to me, and I seemed to be deprived of all discretionary power.

In answer to this, Mr. Brereton informed me, that it had been already settled by his wife's family, that she should be interred with her ancestors and kindred, in their burying-place, at the Baptist Chapel, in the neighbouring town. I was glad of this, so far as it released me at once from an unpleasant alarm, and as there appeared to be no hope of the baptism. However Miss Brereton, having been much struck and affected with what I had said about it, went up to her sister-in-law's chamber, without previously mentioning her intention, and returned after no long absence, with the joyful intelligence that Mrs. Brereton would be most happy to see me to-morrow, to pray with her, and that in the mean time she would reflect upon the other important subject. Upon this I departed, expressing my fervent hope that it might not be too late.

The morrow came, and I was punctual to the hour, which they had told me would be most suitable. I was delighted too to hear that my patient, though not better, was prepared to receive me,

and even anxious for my arrival. I expected, however, a very affecting scene, and with difficulty stilled the trepidation which had begun; and I told Mr. Brereton, that if I found the baptism possible and advisable, I should perform it at once, on my own responsibility, without any reference to the Bishop of the diocese, whose permission and directions, required by the Rubric, were utterly in this emergency beyond our power to obtain.

Having now been introduced into the sick chamber, I was obliged to go round the bed, to the further side, to see the poor sufferer. I could readily conceive that it was with great difficulty she found a posture of momentary comparative ease; for I had already heard, that almost every bone had pierced the skin, and that the slightest pressure occasioned a new wound. She was lying with her emaciated body doubled down from the top to the middle of the bed, where the pillows were placed to support her head and back; and her countenance was thus nearly full towards me. Not a tinge of its former bloom remained; it was pale as death, and shrunken. Before I could speak, she was seized with a coughing fit, but it brought no colour into her face. Her husband, and her sister, whom I had not seen before, flew to her assistance; and, after a short interval, being reinstated in her

position, she became quiet and tranquil. I could perceive the drops of sweat standing thick on her brow. Every eye was upon her, full of anxious concern. At length she raised her own, now collected and composed in her thoughts, although her respiration was short and difficult. Her look betrayed no aberration of intellect, but betokened an entire possession of it, and a superior endowment; as if God had graciously enlarged it in this her terrible extremity.

Her eyes having met mine, I immediately spoke, and said, "I am come, my dear Madam, to pray with you; and I accuse myself for not having been with you much sooner. Indeed, I was entirely ignorant of your sickness, or I should have hastened long ago to offer you the comforts and consolations of our holy religion." Her countenance thanked me, and she moved her lips; but I caught no sounds.

I continued. "To talk must be painful to you; do not distress yourself to attempt it at present. I will read to you a few sentences out of a beautiful exhortation to the sick, which is to be found in our Prayer Book;" and immediately I began with the words, "Good sister, it is written in holy Scripture for our comfort and instruction, that we should patiently, and with thanksgiving, bear our heavenly Father's correction, whensoever by any manner of adversity it

shall please his gracious goodness to visit us;" and so I went on to the end of the paragraph, which speaks of our rising again from death with Christ, and dwelling with him in everlasting life.

There is something particularly soothing in this passage; when I have pronounced it with a slow, solemn, and pathetic tone, I have seen an agony of pain hushed into silence and submission. In the present instance, the dying lady seemed to drink in every word, and lay them to her heart. She closed her eyes, and scarcely breathed. Her husband and the rest of her friends were weeping, and trying to conceal their tears; it was unnecessary, she heeded them not; she was absorbed in her own meditations.

After a short pause, I then said, "Let us pray;" and immediately we all knelt down about the bed. She clasped her hands together, without opening her eyes, but with tokens of feeling and devotion. I went through the prayer for a sick person, when there appeareth small hope of recovery. In the midst of it I paused once or twice, to collect myself. She raised her eyes to ascertain the cause, and saw that I was sympathizing with her, and almost overcome, and unable to articulate. But the pauses were only for a moment, and at length I finished. She herself, however, continued to

pray secretly, as I judged by her still clasped hands, and by the fixedness of her countenance, as if she were looking into the heavens above. I did not attempt to disturb this sacred silence. At last she turned her eyes on me, as expecting and wishing me to proceed.

I thought it a propitious time for the baptism; and she seemed now, by God's blessing, equal to the fatigues of the ceremony, which I intended to use my discretion in shortening for the occasion. Whilst her attention therefore was yet fully alive, having opened the office for the baptism of persons of riper years, I began, "Hear the words of the Gospel," and I proceeded to the end of the exhortation, leaving out some things, and altering others, so as to make the whole of what I said precisely applicable to the case before me. I then took her hand, and said, "These things, my dear Madam, appear to me very convincing, very authoritative, very consolatory; and to leave us no choice. I think they must appear in the same light to you too. And wonderfully merciful has God been to you, in sparing you to perform this great act of entering into covenant with him through Jesus Christ. You believe the Scriptures?"

She pressed my hand, and replied aubibly, "I do." She was elevated with a sort of super-

natural strength, by the singular interest and momentous importance of her situation. I continued, "You repent sincerely of all your errors, and all your sins; omissions and commissions; and you trust for pardon of them solely in the sufferings and merits of Jesus Christ, the only name under heaven given to men whereby we may be saved?" She replied again, as audibly as before, "I do;" and then she added, "God forgive me, and bless me, for Christ's sake." A drop from each eye bespoke her humble piety. Having advanced so far with such unexpected success, I now put the question, "Will you then be baptized in this faith?" Her aswer was fervent, that she wished it without delay.

Upon this, in imitation of the great Apostle, St. Peter, whose steps I was following at a humble distance, I exclaimed, "Can any one forbid water, that this person should not be baptised, who repents and believes?" Her sister, unbaptised herself, hastened out of the room to procure the water; anxious, no doubt, whatever might have been her own prejudices, to contribute what she could to alleviate the last moments of so near and dear a relation.

Meanwhile I read some of the more essential prayers, and, when the water was brought, the prayer of consecration; and then dipping my

fingers into the water, and enquiring her name, I sprinkled her forehead, and baptised her according to the form prescribed by the Author of our faith.

Her head had fallen a little upon the pillow; but when I approached her with the water, she raised it up herself, and turning her whole face towards me, she presented her forehead direct to my hand, and received the sacred symbol, and afterwards the sign of the cross, in a reverential silence, scarcely breathing, and wholly absorbed in the holy rite. The intenseness of the exertion, however, brought on a second coughing fit, from which she was not recovered so easily, or so soon as before. This determined me not to think then of the other sacrament; so I concluded the service, and withdrew, gently pressing her hand, and thanking God aloud for this signal instance of his mercy, in admitting her into the Christian covenant, and in making me the instrument. She followed me with her eyes, which bore witness to her gratitude, but she was unable to speak.

I hurried away, when I had left the chamber, unable also myself to speak to the rest of the family; nor did any subsequent duty of the day erase from my mind a scene of such deep and touching interest.

On the following day I hoped to be able to

administer the other sacrament; and that an opportunity might not be lost by the delay of preparation, I brought with me every thing which was necessary. For this purpose I had a small basket that contained the bread and wine, a napkin, and a plate, without which it would have been impossible for the sick poor to have partaken of the Lord's Supper with the proper decency, or even at all.

The servant at the door told me that her mistress was much worse, and had passed a very restless night. Mr. Brereton himself soon came to me, and confirmed this affecting intelligence. I showed him my basket, and enquired with earnestness, whether, by waiting and watching for an hour or two the fluctuations of her disorder, an interval might not be seized upon sufficiently long to impart to her the inestimable blessing that still remained in store; but I had the mortification to hear frnm him, that she was not capable of it, either in body, or in mind; nor likely to be so.

"Do not speak thus," I said; "God only knows! But tell me; did she seem to be comforted at all by what we did yesterday? Did she appear to recur to it in her thoughts, or did she mention it in any way?"—"Nothing," he answered, "could be more satisfactory. She spoke of her baptism repeatedly in the course of the

evening; and it was manifest that it was always uppermost in her thoughts, whilst she had the power of thinking rationally." "Why then," said I, "should we not endeavour by every means to provide for her, in her approaching crisis, the recollection of a second comfort, not unequal perhaps to the first, which may give her an additional strength to endure the pang of separation from this world and from yourself."

He was affected by this appeal to his feelings; but he did not embrace my offer. "I will leave then," I said, "my basket here; and I most earnestly beg, that you will not scruple to send for me, if you see the chance of a possibility of accomplishing my wish." He attended me to the door, thanking me again and again, but stating his conviction that nothing more could be done. However, I remained at home beyond my usual custom, in the expectation that a message might arrive; and every rap at the door seemed to announce it. But none arrived.

The next morning I walked again to Mrs. Brereton's. The window shutters seemed to be closed, and there was a deep silence and solitude about the house. "Death," I said to myself, "reigns here." However I rung, and was admitted by a maid-servant, who undeceived me. I asked if I could see any of the family; she

went to enquire; and at length Mr. [illegible] joined me in the parlour. He was [illegible] with sorrow, fatigue, and watching; and gave me a melancholy account of our poor [illegible]. "The sacrament," he said, "was quite out of the question;" and he now thought it absolutely dangerous to go into the sick room.

I must confess, I was by no means satisfied; and I expressed a wish to see his sister. Little difficulties, as I should have called them, had before appeared to him to be insuperable; but she had conquered them all at once, by going directly to the sick person herself; and I could scarcely help thinking but that the same might be done now.

She came to me, and I told her candidly, that I expected more encouragement from her than I had just received from her brother. However, she was of the same opinion with him. "Her sister-in-law," she said, "appeared this morning not to know her; and with respect to the danger of going into the room, being herself delicate in health, she had been ordered by the medical men to enter it as little as possible. Besides," she continued, "there must, I suppose, be some persons to take the sacrament with her; and whom shall we find for that purpose? Her own relations, you know, Sir, being Baptists, cannot be asked to do it."

"T[illegible] I replied eagerly, and with some surp[illegible]ny countenance; "but there is the p[illegible] husband; there is his cousin; there i[illegible] Ah! Sir," she said in a moment, and with [illegible]pidation; "I could not venture upon such a thing. I am not prepared."—"Not prepared, my good lady?" I rejoined, still with a tone of surprise, but mixing gentleness with it, lest I might do mischief; "alas! alas! you have had too good an opportunity for preparation. Your own health, you have just informed me, is delicate, and therefore precarious; but you have besides a terrible lesson before your eyes of the uncertainty of human life, which a kind Providence intends, no doubt, for the instruction of this family. Here you have the mistress of it cut down, like a flower, in the bloom of youth and beauty. You have been a daily witness of the grief occasioned by this unexpected blow; and it has not passed over your head, like a summer's cloud, without exciting, I may well presume, many a serious thought, and many a pious resolution, with regard to yourself. Can there be a better preparation than the close view of death itself advancing with rapid strides, as he has done in this house, and laying waste before him youth, and health, and strength? Shall God preach to us with this mighty, terrific voice, and we will not hear?"

As I proceeded in this manner, I assumed naturally a more solemn tone. She was somewhat overpowered by it, but excused herself by saying, that the effect of her sister-in-law's sickness had been very much weakened by the incessant cares of the family, which had devolved upon herself; and that many perplexing and vexatious circumstances had fallen out to disturb and unsettle her thoughts. "However, Sir," she added, "I will get ready in the best manner that I am able, and I will watch diligently for any opportunity that may occur; especially as I know that poor Mrs. Brereton herself was very desirous of receiving the sacrament."

Upon this I took my leave; begging that she would recollect that nothing must be considered an obstacle with respect to myself; that I had seen every possible scene of affliction and misery amongst the sick, and the dying; and that nothing new, or unexpected, could take place to make me at all indisposed to the performance of my duty. She seemed to understand me, and said, "then I do not despair. You will perhaps hear from me." I did not however hear till the next morning, which was Sunday, when I was desired to pray for Mrs. Brereton in the Church. It was done. She died before the evening-service, and was buried according to the original intention, amongst the Baptists.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BARTON FAMILY.—PENITENCE.

SECTION I.

ANN AND MARY BARTON.

Soon after my settlement in this parish, I was sent for to visit a Mrs. Barton, who lived in a distant part of it. At that time I was not acquainted with her character, or connections; nor had I any opportunity to enquire before I went to see her.

I found her in a small cottage, evidently a person in very low circumstances, and surrounded with all the tokens of poverty. She was quite alone, and sitting in a chair by a miserable fire. I could not perceive, however, any marks of sickness about her in her general appearance; but to all my questions about her health, she answered in a melancholy desponding tone, without further explanation, "that her hour was coming."

I conjectured that the disorder was in her mind, rather than her body; and I endeavoured to ascertain her history, with the view of discovering also, what might be most proper for me to say, or do, for her benefit. Entering therefore largely into conversation with her, at length I obtained all the information which I wanted; although, I must confess, I had some doubts of her sincerity. Indeed, to believe her own story, she was like the good Patriarchs of old, who vexed their righteous souls with seeing the wickedness that was all around them, and their own inability to correct it.

It appeared that she had been born, and brought up, and married in Buckinghamshire; and I perceived that she still worked in this parish at the trade which she had learned in that county, and which, I believe, is universal there amongst the women. The implements of it were lying on a table beside her. "*There*," she said, "there was some sense of decency and religion in the poor people. Every Sabbath-day they went to Church, men, women, and children. Here a person attempting to do such a thing would be pointed at, and called a Presbyterian; and would be unable to live in peace with her neighbours. What do you think, Sir, they did with your little book against cursing and swearing, which you sent amongst us but

the other day? Why, Sir, they actually trampled it under their feet in the dirt; and truly they seldom open their mouths but to curse and swear."

I was not ignorant of the deplorable state of this distant part of my parish. As to swearing, I heard it myself perpetually, as I passed their houses in my morning walks, and sometimes I found husbands and wives fighting as well as cursing each other. The very children lisped in oaths. This induced me to put forth a little tract upon the subject; and though I was not sanguine in my expectations of good to arise from it, yet certainly I could not have conceived that it would have been treated with so unusual an indignity as to be trodden in the mire.

However, it had awakened the slumbering conscience of this poor woman. "Ah! Sir," she continued, "I have given too much into the ways of my neighbours, for the sake of being in peace with them. But I cannot bear it any longer. I am growing old; and I know not what is the matter with me; but I think the Lord is warning me to get ready for the next world; and so, Sir, I have sent for you; and I hope you will do what you can for me to save my soul. I see by your little book that you wish to do us good, both here and hereafter."

Having professed my desire to serve her, I

said, "the best thing, my good woman, which seems to be in your power at present is, to go back into your native country. As the Angels said to Lot, so say I to *you;* up, and get you out of this place; for if the Lord do not destroy this wicked place now, he will certainly destroy the people, both body and soul, in hell, hereafter; unless they amend their lives, and turn to him in prayers and tears."

"Ah! Sir," she replied immediately, "it is true enough; but how can I leave a place at once, where I have been settled so long; where my husband gets plenty of work; and where several of my sons and daughters, now married, are living with their young families, and want their poor mother, for something or other, almost every hour?"

"Well," I said; "this is not an unnatural feeling; but, if your salvation be at stake; if the temptations and trials, in the midst of which you live here, are too great for your present strength; undoubtedly you ought to fly from them, and go where you can set yourself, seriously and quietly, to prepare for your latter end."

"Yes, Sir," she replied; "but there is a still greater difficulty. This is our parish to look to in sickness or any other trouble; and if we were to go back into Buckinghamshire, it is not

likely that we should get a new settlement there, where rent is so cheap; and then what would become of us?"

"You forget," I said, "what your Bible tells you of the good Providence of God, which goes with us wherever we go; without which not a sparrow falls to the ground, and which feeds the young ravens that cry, and clothes the lilies of the field in all their beauty. But men are of more value in God's eye than many sparrows; and he has promised to supply all their wants, if they seek his kingdom, and obey his laws. However I am not commanded to tell *you*, as the Angels were to tell Lot, that there are no means of safety but in flight. What I say is the mere word of a man. With God nothing is impossible; and if he see fit, he can endue you with sufficient strength to work out your salvation even here. Yet you are aware that hitherto you have failed; and in my judgment it looks like tempting God, to go on, day after day, and year after year, of your own free will and choice, exposing yourself to dangers which threaten your ruin, and expecting *him*, with or without reason, to throw his protecting shield over you."

In answer to this, she repeated, and enenlarged upon all her former objections; having nothing new to say; and it was manifest that

she was resolved to be saved here, or no where; so I enquired whether she could not at least move away to some more orderly part of the parish, where she might live piously and virtuously without being ridiculed or hooted at by her neighbours. This suggestion, however, was as little relished as the other. She had lived, she said, in this house, ever since she had been in the parish; it was moderately rented; it was conveniently situated for her husband's work; to remove from it would carry her away from her grand-children who depended upon her; and besides, where could she find another house? Every lodging was crowded already.

"Well then," I said, "since you seem determined to make no painful or inconvenient sacrifice of this kind for your everlasting welfare, what is it that you intend to do? Have you made up your mind to wait quietly where you are, like Lot's sons-in-law, and so perish in your sins? Or, on the other hand, to amend your life; and in spite of scorn, to practice the duties which you have so long neglected; and thus, by striving to fulfil God's commands in the midst of a wicked generation, to entitle yourself to the powerful assistance of his Holy Spirit; without which you can do nothing to any effectual purpose? For instance; that we may proceed step by step; since it pleased God

to stir your heart a little, have you been to Church?"

"I cannot say that I have, Sir;" was her answer. "I will tell you no falsehood. The Church, you know, Sir, is nearly two miles from us; and when we get there, the poor can find no room, but slips and corners, from which it is impossible to see or hear."

"You are mistaken," I said, "with respect to the present circumstances of the Church. There are now many comfortable sittings, fitted up on purpose for the poor; and in the afternoon every decent person may be seated in a pew in front of the minister. But, if this were not so; remember what David said; that he had rather be a door-keeper in God's house, than dwell in the richest palaces of the ungodly. It would be no bad proof of humbleness and docility of temper, and of a pious wish to please God, if you did your best under unfavourable circumstances, and then left the rest to *him;* and at all events, if you were compelled to stand afar off, and did it not by choice, like the poor contrite Publican, you might smite your breast, as he did, in some corner of the Church, and say inwardly, God be merciful to me a sinner! This is the conduct which God will accept and bless. But to stay away from Church altogether, because you cannot be seated so well

as you might wish, shews nothing of the pious David's spirit; and it shews also that religion is but a secondary, an inferior object with you. Do you expect to be saved without any public worship of God?"

"No, Sir, indeed," she answered; "and I have not neglected it altogether; but knowing the great distance of the Church, and hearing of the inconvenience of it, and the want of room, I have been once or twice to our little Chapel here, which is a great deal nearer, and is besides open at a better time for the poor, and where they make much of us, and place us in nice warm pews."

"Very well," I said; "I hope you have been edified; although, perhaps, you have not taken the best method for improving yourself, and for bringing down God's blessing upon you. But what have you learnt?"

"Why, Sir," she answered, "the minister seemed to be a very good man, and he told us a great many good things; but there was one thing which he said over and over again, as if he could never say it often enough; which has made me so low and sorrowful, as you see me now." "And what was that, good woman?" I enquired rather eagerly; and her answer was, as far as I could comprehend it, that he dwelt particularly upon certain inward feelings, which he affirmed

to be essentially necessry to salvation; so that, as she understood it, she could not be saved, unless she felt assured in her own mind that God had already saved her, or decreed to do so.

"Ah!" said I; "I am afraid this minister, as you call him, a minister without any regular authority from God, has been wading out of his own depth as well as your's. We know nothing of God's decrees, except that we are sure he has decreed to save all true Christians; and we know nothing also from Scripture of any feelings which can assure us beforehand of our salvation, except we feel besides, that we believe, and love, and obey our Creator and Redeemer. If our heart condemn us not, then may we have confidence towards God, that he will accept our good intentions and our earnest endeavours to please him, and that he will save us for the sake of Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for all mankind. This is easy to understand; stick to this, and trust not to any other feelings. The greatest sinners, continuing in their sins, have worked themselves up nevertheless to an imagination (but it was a vain imagination) that they were amongst the elect children of God, who must needs be saved under any circumstances; and then forsooth they became proud and arrogant, and neglected themselves, and despised their neighbours, and doomed them to de-

struction. Avoid and check these mistaken ungodly feelings to the utmost of your power; they will make you wicked, or turn your brain."

"They have almost done it already," she answered, "whilst I have been trying to get them. But God help me! And you, Sir, I hope, will teach me, what I must do to be saved."

"Nothing is so easy as to teach you this most valuable of all knowledge," I replied; "but the difficulty will come afterwards, when you are to practice what you have been taught. Yet a person with sincere intentions may overcome every difficulty; because God himself will assist the natural weakness of such a person with a sufficient portion of his own strength. I have spoken to you already about public worship; and I cannot advise you too often, to be constant and regular in your attendance at the parish-church; not to run with itching ears after strange preachers; not to gape after new-fangled methods of salvation; but to walk onwards, quietly and steadily, in those excellent paths, which are as old as the Gospel itself; remembering always, that he who doeth righteousness is righteous, and that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. You must therefore repent heartily of the past; you must make new and better resolves for the future; and to put yourself in the way of obtaining God's grace to en-

able you to keep those resolves, you must pray to him continually, and you must worship him in all his ordinances. Have you ever received the Holy Sacrament of Christ's body and blood?"

"Never, Sir," she said, "I am so unworthy; I should not dare to do it."

"We are all unworthy," I replied; "and it is very proper that we should think so; for God loves, and Christ preaches, humbleness of mind. But you need not fear to come to the holy table, if you really are determined to renounce your sins, and to pursue piety and virtue. The holy table indeed is the best place for making such determinations, and for binding you to the fulfilment of them, and for obtaining strength to perform all your duties. But what will become of your own family? Will *they* help you, or hinder you in this new course of living? Your husband, for instance? What is he?"

"Alack! Sir," she answered; "he is a poor ignorant hard-working creature. He slaves to get his bread, and maintain his family; and he seldom goes to the ale-house. But he never prays to God, and most likely never thinks of him; and if I ever try, as I have done of late, to turn his mind that way, he hardly seems to understand me; and does not say a word himself; and gets off to something else; so, that, I think, he would be the first to jeer me, if I were

to become a church-goer. When I went to the chapel the other day, he called me Methodist, and other vexatious names; and, Sir, he curses and swears in a most terrible manner for nothing, or next to nothing. Then, Sir, he is as deaf as a post, and cannot read a letter."

"This is all very much to be lamented, good woman," I said; "and undoubtedly you will have great difficulties to contend with, and great trials to go through. But the greater your trials and difficulties here, the greater will be your reward hereafter, if you conquer them all; and if Christ strengthen you, you may do every thing. But now tell me about your children."

"Ah! Sir," she replied; "it is a pitiful story to tell. They have got a bad name in the parish; and indeed I cannot deny but that they are very wild, and drunken, and will set themselves to no regular business. A cart and a horse to do little jobs with; and dusting, and bone-gathering, is what they chiefly trust to; and this takes them into mischief in many ways, and is altogether an idle vagabond sort of life; but they like it, and will do nothing else; and God knows how they who are married support their families! Indeed, Sir, you may see their poor children running about half-naked and always without shoes or stockings."

"Are any of them old enough to come to

school?" I asked. "No, Sir," she answered; "they are not." "Have you any of your own," I asked again, "who are not too old for such a purpose?" "My youngest lad," she said, "is just eleven years old." "Oh! then," I rejoined eagerly, "send him immediately to my school; perhaps, with God's help, we may be able to teach him something good, and may give him a desire to take a different course from that which his brothers have so unfortunately taken. And then also he will come to Church every Sunday, and you may come with him; which will make the thing more easy to you, and less observed, till your habits are fixed, and scorn and opposition no longer deter you from your duty."

"Alack aday! Sir," she replied; "he gets six shillings a week, young as he is; and we should be put to sad shifts without his earnings. I pick up a few pence, when I am well, by these bobbins; but bread is so dear, and fuel, and other necessary things, that we can but just make both ends meet without troubling the parish."

"Then," said I, "you are resolved, it seems, to let this boy grow up as the rest, in the worst employments, and in the worst company, rather than pinch yourself a little, to give him a chance of learning to read and write, and to distin-

guish good from evil, and to love and fear God. I am perfectly sure, that you know very well yourself, that, if he be suffered to proceed as he now does, he will be taught to lie, to cheat, to steal, to drink, to swear, and many other bad things, which I do not like to name; and he will be a thorn in your own side, and a new load of guilt upon your conscience to weigh you down to the very grave. Is not all this, I ask you, the natural and usual course of circumstances? Have you any reason to expect that your case will turn out otherwise?"

Mrs. Barton fetched a deep sigh, and fixed her eyes upon the ground, and answered nothing. She was convinced, no doubt; but she could not relinquish so easily the little comforts which six shillings a week might purchase. However, at length she raised herself, and said, that she would talk to her husband about it; which I understood too well to mean, that nothing good would be done. Hereupon I took my leave; just reminding her of the several heads of the advice which I had given her, and expressing my hope that her present sorrow was sincere, and would be improved into a real repentance and amendment of life. Then I added, that I should look anxiously for the boy at school, and for herself at church.

Sunday and Monday passed; Mrs. Barton was not at church, nor the boy at school. They passed again with the same result. I called; she was reported to be quite well, and gone out. A few days afterwards I nearly met her in her own street, but upon seeing me she went hastily into a neighbour's house with a manifest wish to avoid me. In another week, when she had nearly met me again, she crossed over to the other side of the way, and pretended not to observe me. After a little while, however, she ventured to pass me on the same side of the way, though without looking at me, and not giving me a convenient opportunity of speaking to her. At length all sense of shame and compunction seemed to be worn off; she looked me in the face, and treated me as a perfect stranger; not even dropping the slightest curtesy as she went by me. It would not be easy to account for this in a satisfactory manner; but it was evident that she had relapsed into her former habits; and probably she now regarded the whole of her conduct, in sending for me and talking with me, as a weakness to be buried in utter oblivion.

For the present I suffered things to remain in this state; having indeed from the very beginning despaired of doing any good, when I saw so many objections started to every scheme

of amendment which I proposed. Winter, however came on, and with extraordinary severity. Work failed; distress ensued amongst the labouring families; and the most profligate were the most importunate for parochial relief. The young Bartons, with less pretence than others, were more clamorous; and never omitted to apply when the committee sat, and often besides in the intermediate days. On these occasions I became acquainted with the greater part of them; and one night a man of a very remarkable figure presenting himself before us, I could not wait to hear his story, but enquired at once who he was, and was answered that it was old Barton, the father. Once seen, such a personage was never to be forgotten. He was a complete specimen of a gypsey from the retired lanes and woods of Buckinghamshire; and his long residence here had produced no material alteration in the generic characters of the race. He wore a smock-frock which encompassed him all around, and which was plentifully besmeared with grease and mud. His hair hung over his ears, and face, and down to his shoulders, in long straight lank black locks, and his eyes were scarcely visible peeping between them. He held his hat in both his hands before him, and stood bolt-upright without uttering a syllable, or even appearing to have the power to speak. How-

ever, having been questioned by the nearest person, whom he could not hear without bawling, he at length explained his wants, and was dismissed with a moderate relief. I then enquired his character, and found, besides what his wife had told me of him, that he was a notorious thief, though appearing to be the most stupid of men. No circumstances during the winter brought me into nearer contact with this wretched family; but I did not fail, from my seat at the board, to admonish the sons, as to the irregularity of their lives; which, however, only brought upon me in return a surly, or abusive answer.

MARY BARTON.

In the spring Mrs. Barton sent for me again. I went; and without giving me a moment to talk to her, she conducted me into a small back-room, like a wash-house, where I saw, lying on a bed without curtains, a young woman, evidently in the last stage of a consumption. The walls of the chamber were damp, and green. The poor sick person herself was coughing, and spitting blood. When a moment of ease came, she did not sink back upon the pillow, but laid her head sideways upon the edge of the bedstead, and closed her eyes. Her cheeks were

tinged with a flush of red, occasioned by the exertion.

After contemplating this piteous object for a few minutes 'till all was quiet, I asked who the poor sufferer was. "She is my daughter," said Mrs. Barton. "Is she married?" I asked again. "No, Sir," she answered; "more's the pity! but it signifies little now—she is going, and she has one less to sorrow after her." This speech was very pathetic, but of dubious meaning. I guessed, however, that the young woman had been delivered of a child, born out of the sacred pale of wedlock. The next sentence confirmed my suspicion. "She has been unfortunate, Sir," said Mrs. Barton; and would no doubt have proceeded to tell me all her history; but at this moment the sick daughter opened her eyes, as if to expostulate with her mother, for unnecessarily exposing her shame; and I immediately went close to the side of the bed, and, in a tone of sympathy, enquired of her how long she had been ill. The answer was, "Two months, Sir." "And have you been here," I said, "the whole of that time?" "Not the whole," she replied; "but it will be six weeks to-morrow, if I live till then." "God alone," said I, "knows how long you will live; whether for one day, or two days, or many; but we all of us know this, that God will not take you, until

he has tried all his mercies upon you. This sickness has been long, and I dare say, at times very painful; but it is a great mercy, and a clear proof of God's love for your soul, which he wishes by every method to save. But, my poor creature, why did not you send for me sooner, to help you in your troubles, and to perform my office of reconciling you to God through Jesus Christ?"

Here the mother interposed, and said; "I will tell you the truth, Sir, and no lie. My daughter has been wishing, day after day, to see you; but she was now and then so much better, that I thought she would recover, and that we need not trouble you to come so far. And indeed, Sir, I am ashamed myself to see your face, and have put it off the longer on that account. I have seen you pass the house twenty times; and twice or thrice I was ready to start up to call you; but my heart failed me, 'till there was no more time to lose. Ah! Sir, you gave me some good advice; if I had followed it, things might have been better now."

She wept—I comforted her; but at the same time, lest I might administer a false comfort, I probed the wound to the bottom. "Good woman," I said, "God gives you another opportunity of hearing my advice. He forces it upon you; so great is his goodness! And if your tears

are tears of penitence for yourself; not worldly tears for worldly things; for the loss of credit; for the imprisonment of two of your sons; for the threatening sickness of this daughter, who now lies stretched in pain before your eyes; your tears will be dear to God, and he will accept them, and note them down in his book to be remembered for ever. But we will talk of *that* another time, with God's leave; your daughter requires all our attention first."

So I turned again towards the daughter. Her face was bathed in tears as well as her mother's, and the whole scene was a very trying one. Without doubt she felt for her brothers, who were sent to prison on a charge of robbery; and she was touched to the quick with a sense of the disgrace which she herself had brought upon her family; but, I believe, her tears flowed from a deeper source, and betokened her earnest desire of pardon and forgiveness at the hand of God. To help this feeling therefore, I said, "Let us all compose ourselves for a short time with reading and prayer. You would wish me (would you not?) to pray for you?" "I have long wished it," she replied; "and may God hear you! I am a great sinner—I know it too well; and I see now the end of it in this world, although so young. But the next world; the next world; what is to become of me there!" Her sentence

was broken with sobs, and coughing succeeded. Her mother supported her in her arms, and as she hung over her, bedewed her with fresh tears.

By this time I had found a Prayer-Book, and was on my knees; and when the coughing ceased, I said, "I will read you the humble confession and prayer of one of the greatest penitents whom the world ever saw, King David; and I will read it slowly, that you may understand and feel every sentence, and apply it to yourself, and join in it from your heart; which if you do, I tell you confidently, that God will pity and forgive *you*, as he did *him*." She clasped her hands, and waited in silence, whilst I turned to the fifty-first Psalm. Her whole manner demonstrated sincerity.

I read the three first verses, and then paused for an instant. She had accompanied me with her lips, and still continued to utter something, although inaudibly. When her lips were motionless, I read four verses more, beginning with the ninth; and then I paused again, to give her time for reflection and application to herself. She went on for a short time repeating something as before. Again I resumed my reading, and went through the 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 13th, 15th, 16th, and 17th verses; some of which being pronounced, as the subject of them required, with rather an elevated and exulting tone, after

the former ones of deep dejection and humble supplication, her spirits were evidently cheered, and a glimmering of hope kindled in her breast. She seemed perfectly to understand the whole, and therefore, for fear of weakening the effect, I did not attempt to explain, or enlarge upon, any thing. But the Prayer-Book, out of which I had read the Psalm, being prefixed to the Bible, I turned to the seventh chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, and rose from my knees, and said, "I will now read you a beautiful story out of the New Testament, that you may see more clearly and certainly, what a mighty power the broken and contrite spirit has with God, through the intercession of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ."

She bowed her head at the sacred name of *him*, before whom hereafter every knee shall bow, either in holy adoration, or in hopeless despair. I rejoiced to have thus discovered that she knew him, and I secretly prayed for time to make her acquainted with the all-sufficiency of his merits to atone for the sins of the whole race of mankind.

However, standing by the bed-side (for there was no chair at liberty) I began at the 26th verse, and read to the end of the chapter; intermixing a few explanations and remarks, as I went on, applicable to her own case. For in-

stance, "the Pharisees," I said, "were proud of their good deeds, or of what they thought to be good deeds; and fancied themselves God's especial favourites; and despised and condemned all others, as wicked and reprobates, who lived in a different manner from themselves. But no deed is good enough in God's sight to claim a reward of *him*. In all we do we fall short, in some way or other; the very best of us fall short, of true goodness. We must therefore humble ourselves before God, instead of boasting of any merit that we might seem to have; and we must look to the merits of Christ, and plead *them* only in our behalf. Such is the disposition that God and Christ love; and such are the persons whom Christ was sent to seek and to save. These self-sufficient Pharisees therefore did not profit by him, because they imagined that they did not want him. The sick only call for the great Physician of souls; but *they* vainly thought themselves whole, and so they rejected him with scorn. The very harlots went into the kingdom of God, but *they* would not believe or receive him, and so they died in their sins. When I had finished the chapter, she said, "Oh! that I could hear those blessed words, 'Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven!' then I should be happy indeed, and wish God to take me. But the sins of that poor woman could

never have been so great as mine; nor am I, I fear, so penitent as she was."—"Pray to God, then," I replied, "to make you so; and as to the greatness of her sins, no doubt they were very great; but it is not necessary to know how great they were, nor to compare our own with her's. God has nothing to do with much or little in such a case; but, at all events, they that love him much, will be forgiven much. This is the Gospel, and these, I hope, are glad tidings to you."—"Glad indeed," she said; "and I will think of nothing else; and I will try to love my Maker and my Redeemer, that they may love *me* in return, and save my soul."

In this propitious frame of mind I left her for the present, having first kneeled again, and repeated the Lord's Prayer, and the first prayer in the office for the visitation of the sick, and the benediction at the end. As I got up to take leave of her, and went out of the room, she eagerly besought me to call again soon, and to pray for her in the Church. I promised to do so, and hurried away, being late, and not now disposed to talk with the mother.

The next morning I returned to this interesting scene of action. In the interval I had learned that my poor patient had begun life with very good auspices; having been taken early into the service of a kind mistress, who had taught her

sion had thrown over such actions, she now saw them in all their deformity and wickedness, as they had been long ago described to her in the days of her former innocence; conscience had regained its just influence, and stung her thoughts with a severe retribution of anguish; and she was herself more inclined to exaggerate, than to extenuate, every sin or folly of which she had been guilty.

But to go back to her history. Whilst in the service above mentioned, she attracted the attentions of a young man in a superior rank to her own, who seduced her, and then deserted her, and left her pregnant. Necessity compelled her to quit her place. Having saved something, she did not come home to her parents, but retired to an obscure lodging, where she was delivered of a little girl. By degrees her money was exhausted, and her character being lost, she listened to the proposals of a second lover, with whom she lived as his wife, though not married to him, until he saw that she was likely to have a family; and then he abandoned her. At this moment in great distress, she came to the desperate resolution of throwing herself upon the neighbouring town, and then, step by step, she plunged deeper and deeper into all the vices accompanying such a life. These vices brought on the usual diseases, and the diseases termi-

to read and write, and had sent her also to Church. There was indeed manifestly about her a degree of decency far beyond the rest of her family, derived from those first impressions and habits, and which no subsequent habits had effaced. Here I saw the benefit of the knowledge and the principles which had been instilled into her by her mistress. Circumstances had for a time triumphed over them; but those circumstances being now entirely changed, the knowledge and the principles had free scope to act, and were in their turn predominant. The name of Jesus was not new to her, as it was to many whom I was summoned to visit on their death-beds. She knew to whom the sinner in general might fly for pardon, although she did not seem to know the whole extent of the mercy of the Gospel, and thought perhaps that she herself might be excluded from it. Upon being told, therefore, that God's mercy through Christ was bounded by no limits, and perfectly universal, she was prepared and stimulated to love much, with the hope of having much forgiven. Nor was it necessary that I should now teach her the great principles of right and wrong, in order that she might examine and scrutinise her actions, with the view to a thorough repentance; a long sickness, and the approach of death, having torn asunder the veil which licentious pas-

nated in consumption. Her two children, meanwhile, had been thrown into the workhouse, and she herself, now sinking under a mortal attack, was received by her parents without difficulty, and had come to end her days in the house where she was born.

Such was the outline of the mournful story which had been related to me, and of which I expected to make some use in my future conversations with this repentant prodigal. Arriving at the door, I was let in by Mrs. Barton, who told me that her daughter had just fallen asleep, but that she would go in and wake her; for she was sure, she said, that nothing would do her so much good as my prayers. "I will pray with her," I answered, "very willingly; but she must not be disturbed by any means. She had perhaps no sleep in the night."—"It is very true," she answered; "and I think, Sir, she was not kept awake so much by her disorder, as by going over again and again the story which you read to her, and which struck her to the very heart. Indeed, Sir, she is a true penitent."

"I am glad to hear it," I replied, looking round for a vacant chair; "and I will wait a little to see whether she will wake of her own accord." Upon this Mrs. Barton reached me a chair; having first unloaded it of the numberless things that were crowded upon it, and having made it

as clean as she could. I sat down, and said, "it is a long time, Mrs. Barton, since I talked with you on your own affairs, and at your own desire. You confessed, yesterday, that I had given you some good advice, and you seemed to regret that you had not followed it. Pray what prevented you?" "Ah! Sir," she answered, "I am ashamed to think of it. But many things prevented it, which needed not, if I had been of the right spirit. My poor lad was very unwilling to go to school, and I did not correct him as I ought to have done; and now it is all over; for he has left us, and shifts for himself. We let them all do as they liked, and now you see what it has brought them to. They tell me that I shall never want, whilst they can get any thing; but they will never hear any of my warnings, and I fear they will bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." She wiped away a tear, and then proceeded. "I might have come to Church, I know, Sir; for that was in my own power, whilst the Lord gave me strength to walk; but sometimes I had not a decent thing to stand up in, being forced to pawn my best clothes; and now of late the cry against my children has been so great, that I am glad to hide my face within doors. And there I have no comfort. My old man is cross, and abuses me for every thing that goes wrong; and now this

poor girl is dying under my eyes, who ought to have been the staff of my old age." Here she wept again, and I was prepared to speak, but the sound of coughing in the next room caught my attention. "It is my daughter," said Mrs. Barton; "she is awake, and I will go in, and get her ready to see you, Sir."

She did so, and in a few minutes I was at the bed-side, and inquired of my patient, if her sleep had been comfortable, "It was short, Sir," she said, "but very comfortable. I was not scared by any terrible dreams, which used to happen before. But indeed my mind is now more at ease than it was. I fear I shall presume too much. Yet if I think of my past life, it is enough to humble me. Lord Jesus, have mercy upon me!" Thus did she frequently ejaculate whilst I was with her.

"How gracious," said I, "has God been to you! Foolish unthinking men might say, that it is a grievous thing to be afflicted with so long and so painful a sickness. But you will have the wisdom and the gratitude to say with King David, 'it is good for me that I have been afflicted,' for it has brought me back to the knowledge and the belief of my God and Saviour. If you had been cut down in the midst of your sins, in riot and sensuality, with foolish or impious mirth upon your tongue, where would have been

your soul?" A shade of horror darted over her pallid countenance, and her mother sobbed aloud. "But," I continued "it pleased God to spare you, that he might bring you to repentance; to chastise your body with disease and pain, that he might heal your distempered mind. Thus is he severe for the purposes of mercy; not because he hates you, but because he loves you. But I will read you the two exhortations to the sick, where all this and much more is better said."

I now read them, stopping at the sentence which calls upon the sick persons to examine, and accuse, and condemn themselves, that they may not be accused and condemned in the fearful judgment of the last day. I always pause here, as if to give those whom I address some moments for reflection; and the pause generally leads to useful conversation. In the present case, my humble patient, who had listened attentively throughout the whole, and in particular passages had clapsed her hands with fervour, and invoked earnestly the sacred names which are mighty to save, now said, "Yes, Sir, I do accuse and condemn myself, without seeking for any excuses for my wickedness. But God knows whether I feel my wickedness as much as I ought. To examine myself is a dreadful thing; but I try to do it, and will not willingly spare myself any pain."

"You are very right," I replied; "and I would have you call every single sin to remembrance, if it be possible, that you may leave none unrepented of to rise up against you hereafter, when you stand at Christ's tribunal. And lest your memory should be treacherous, pray as David did, 'O my God, cleanse thou me from my secret faults;' purge away the guilt of all those numberless sins, which their very multitude has caused me to forget, or which I committed without noticing at the time, or which in my ignorance I did not consider to be sins; cleanse me from them all, as if I repented of them separately, with the blood of that immaculate Lamb, which was shed to wash away the sins of the whole world. Let your repentance be of this kind, and I promise you, in the words of the Prophet Isaiah, that, although 'your sins have been as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they have been red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'" "Oh! that it might be as you say," she replied eagerly; "but, Sir, you have caused me new fears, and new reasons for humility and grief. I see now that my sins, which I never think of, may be more in number than the very hairs of my head, and quite impossible to be reckoned up. Will God indeed be so merciful as to forgive me all these, if I put them thus together, and ask him to pardon the whole number

at once, without my particularly recollecting any one of them?" "Be assured that he will," I answered, "if you deal with him sincerely, and not in hypocrisy. And it may happen, if he should prolong your life, so as to enable you to read more of his word, and to understand how pure, and holy, and severe it is, your mind may be opened, and a new light may break in upon you; and then you may bring to the bar of conscience a thousand actions, which passed before unnoticed, and to which you imputed no sin, but which at length you now see to be exceeding sinful. Thus will your repentance become daily more complete, and more effectual, and more acceptable to *him*, who died for you."

"Ah! Sir," she said, "if God should give me a longer life, and still more, if he should restore me to health, I might repent better, in the way that you teach me, and by leading a new life. But God knows best, and my own heart may deceive me. The wretched things, which I once thought pleasures, are now odious to me in the remembrance; and I am quite astonished that I could ever have loved them; but God knows what might happen. New circumstances may produce new desires; misfortunes and want might overpower all my resolutions; and how could I rise again from so dreadful and disgraceful a

fall! Therefore God's will be done! Let *him* dispose of me, as may seem best to himself. But whilst he suffers me to live, I will repent, and I will study his word, to repent better daily."

These were truly Christian sentiments; and wiser or nobler there could not be. The tears start into my eyes whilst I record them after the lapse of many a year. At the time they flowed profusely; nor was I able to answer a word. She who uttered these sentiments, was by birth of the meanest rank; her poverty was extreme; her body was wasted by disease; she was lying on an old uncurtained bed; a dirty tattered rug was suspended by nails between the bed and the door; the coverlid was patched, and yet ragged; no medicines, no cordials, were to be seen there, to procure a temporary sleep, to sustain the sinking frame, to rouse the broken spirits. A jug of barley water, standing on the hearth, by a fire that scarcely glimmered, was all there was, to moisten now and then her parched lips, but not to impart nourishment or strength. (Take physic, pomp! Visit these scenes of mourning, ye sons and daughters of riot! and ye will learn to estimate the vanity of your pleasures and your pride!) These were the external appearances; yet was there not to be heard, or seen, one single murmur of discontent, one single impatient word or look; all was submission and

peaceful resignation to the will of God, as being most just, and wise, and good! Am I not right in saying, that the sentiments uttered in this hovel were noble and exalted? Worthy of the loftiest palace, of the most elevated rank, or mind? As I have mentioned already, I could not reply; so I knelt down, and remembering how appropriate that divine prayer would be, which stands next to the absolution, I opened to it, and repeated it; interrupted indeed by frequent choakings, but in some way or other I repeated it; and I saw that every petition went to her heart. The Lord's Prayer also having been read, and the benediction of St. Paul, I rose, touched her hand, and withdrew with speed, to indulge alone a sympathy, which I could not control.

On the following day I visited her again. Some money which I had given to her mother had been well laid out for her benefit. She had now oranges by her bed-side, and some fruits of our own country, which were very grateful and refreshing to her palate; and Mrs. Warton had sent her some currant-jelly, which was pleasant to her lips and throat, as well as nourishing to her whole frame. But she was sinking, as it appeared, hastily to the grave; and, as her mother told me, before I entered the sick room,

she had during the last night been rather bewildered in her mind; so that I thought it proper to lose no time in administering the sacrament to her, which she was both fit, and I was confident would be most happy, to receive at my hands.

Immediately on my entering the sick room, she looked at me with a ray of gratitude beaming through her deadly pale countenance, and said, "I owe all these comforts to your goodness, Sir; and much more than what is to be seen; I mean trust in God through Jesus Christ, and hope of pardon. I do not know how to thank you, as I ought; but if I were worthy to pray to God for *you*, and all your family, to bless *you* and your's in every thing, I would do it from my heart. I do it indeed, and will continue to do it."

My answer was, that I should be rewarded over and above, for the discharge of my duty, if I saw her depart in peace with her God, and with herself; and, "I am come now," I said, "to do perhaps some better thing for you, than I have yet been able to do. I am come to offer you the blessed sacrament of the body and blood of your Saviour." Here I paused, for her face was disturbed with a sort of convulsive motion, and a few tears started from her eyes. I could not interpret her feelings, but the sequel did;

and they were honourable to her. Recovering a little, she exclaimed, "Ah! Sir, I remember in former days, when I first went to the table of our Lord, with my good mistress, who had taught me all about it, how resolved I was to walk in the paths of virtue during my whole life. The kneeling at the rail to eat the bread and drink the wine, made me tremble to think what I was doing; and I felt too sure that I could never afterwards be guilty of any wickedness. But by degrees I forgot to pray to God to keep me upright, and my own strength was too little to preserve me from stumbling and falling; so I fell very low indeed, and have been pointed at by the finger of scorn. Will God suffer me to touch the bread and wine again? Will he not make it poison to me, instead of health, either to my mind, or body? If I might presume, a poor sinner, just beginning to see and feel the error of my ways; if I might venture, to eat and drink such holy fearful things, after all that has passed; if *you* think I *may*, Sir, I shall be happy indeed, and am ready now." Her face was convulsed again, and fresh tears of penitence again issued forth. Her mother covered her eyes with both her hands, to hide her distress. I was myself deeply touched with this proof of her humility, and I thought in my own mind, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs

is the kingdom of God!" There was also in the chamber, one of her sisters-in-law, a tall stout woman with hard features, who seemed little likely to be moved with any expression of fine Christian feeling; but I saw a tear on her cheek; and I was glad that she was there, and hoped that the scene might contribute to her spiritual welfare. Her husband was one of the sons of Mrs. Barton now in prison, but expected to be released in a few days; and I thought it would be well, before his return, to pre-occupy her mind, if possible, with some good principles which might be turned to account in the management of her family.

Having observed for a moment the groupe before me, and having collected my own spirits, I said, "I have no doubt whatever but that your partaking of the Lord's Supper, under your present circumstances, and with your present sentiments, will be a service well-pleasing to God; but that you may judge better for yourself, I will read you the invitation addressed to the communicants in our Common-prayer." This being done, I continued; "You see here, that you are invited to draw near with faith, and to take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort, if you are satisfied in your mind with respect to three points; of which the first is, that you do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins. I

am sure that I need not question you in this particular. I have had every proof of your sorrow for your sins, and of your abhorrence of them, that I could expect, or wish. The next point is, that you are in love and charity with your neighbours. And let me remind you that by your neighbours is meant all those who have been thrown into your way in the concerns of life; not those only, who have lived next door to you, or in the same street, parish, or town. Tell me then, have you so subdued your feelings with respect to persons, who may have injured you even in the highest degree, that you now think of them only with the spirit of Christian love and charity? Can you now bless *them*, who have been a curse to *you!* Can you now pray for *them*, who have used you despitefully; and for *them*, who seduced you into the paths of wickedness, and, but for God's mercy, left you to perish in them, both body and soul, to all eternity?"

She was greatly agitated by this solemn appeal, and hesitated how to answer me. I watched the movements of her countenance, and I fancied that her thoughts dwelt painfully upon some wicked persons, whom she could not yet bring herself to pardon. Before she was able to speak I proceeded thus: "To pardon those who have injured us, in all cases, may require

the very utmost extent and perfection of Christian charity; and if we could arrive at it, then we should be like God himself, and Jesus Christ; and we might approach them with the greater boldness. Christ, you know, prayed for his very murderers; and, what is more, whilst they were in the act of nailing him to the cross. God forgives every day his greatest enemies, who blaspheme his name, and scorn his mercies; he showers benefits upon them, all the common benefits of nature, and benefits intended for their especial use, to bring them to repentance. He might destroy them at a single blow; but he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked; he would have all men to be saved, and therefore he sent his beloved Son to die for them. This is the pattern then after which we should copy. But in truth, the injuries, that we receive from one another, are comparatively of so petty a nature in general, that we might well forgive them, without such a pattern before us, and without having been assured, that we shall only be forgiven ourselves, in proportion as we forgive our fellow-creatures. Indeed, if the injury endangers our immortal soul, it may reasonably cost us a severe pang to banish all feeling of bitterness against those who inflicted it. Before we can bring ourselves to so noble and divine a temper, it may reasonably cost us much

study of that beautiful pattern, and much struggling to bend our own reluctant wills to the will of God. But we must try to do it; and by God's help we *may* do it; and then we shall be the more fit to dwell amongst the peaceful blessed spirits of heaven."

I paused. The various emotions by which she had been disturbed had now somewhat subsided, and she said, "Ah! Sir, there are things which I think I can forgive; which I hope I *have* forgiven; but I fear I never can forget them. They are too deeply graven in my memory; I cannot root them out. Ought I, Sir, to forget them as well as to forgive them? And does God require this?" "Certainly not," I answered. "In the great work of self-examination you *must* retrace the incidents of your life; and whilst you preserve the reason, which God has given you, you cannot but perceive what share others may have had in the sins which you have committed. These things *must* spring up in your thoughts, whether you will, or not; but, if they should create revengeful feelings, you must check those feelings perpetually, until you have subdued them; in short, until you can remember, and yet forgive."

"Oh, Sir," she replied, "God forbid, that I should try to shift any blame from myself upon another! But I was once innocent of great of-

fences, and a treacherous man (I cannot but call him so, Sir,) robbed me of that bright jewel; he seduced, he betrayed, he deserted me; he deserted me, when I was about to make him a father; and, when left alone, I must needs be reduced to a more sensible disgrace, and a deeper misery. He had rifled my best treasure, the only thing for which he cared. I confess, my angry passions were roused against that man; passions unknown to me before; and in my great distress I besought heaven to punish him. I heaped curses upon his head." The image of the transaction seemed to pass before her eyes, as if it had just occurred; and it gave a vehemence to her voice and manner, which exceeded her feeble exhausted strength. I interposed therefore, and desired that she would calm herself, and not endeavour to renew these bitter recollections, which agitated her so much; and I added, "I am sure you have repented of them."

"I have indeed, Sir," she said; "but I did even worse than this. God forgive me! My betrayer went to sea; the ship was wrecked; he perished in the waters. Not a moment was spared him to say, God have mercy on me! And where did he go, thus suddenly, thus unprepared? Ah! Sir, I can pity him now that I know the value of a soul; but I did not pity

him then. Heaven, I thought, had heard, and granted my prayers; and in my blindness and wickedness I blessed the God of Heaven. But I see now how different my conduct and thoughts should have been in that moment of triumph, as I foolishly conceived it to be. God however has been gracious and merciful to *me*, in giving me time to reflect, and in forcing me to do it by long and heavy afflictions; so that I have learnt to be merciful to every other wretched sinner; and I wish now from my heart, that I could obtain forgiveness even for *him*, who was my ruin. If we pray for the dead, Sir, will God hear us?"

"Certainly," I answered, "there is no sin in praying for the dead; but at the same time it cannot be of any use to the dead themselves. As the tree falls, so it lies. Whatever was our state with respect to God at the moment of our departure hence, the same will it be at the dreadful day of judgment. Nothing subsequently done can make a change in that state. But the prayer, which is not granted, being offered up with a sincere and contrite spirit, may return with a blessing into your own bosom; and at all events such a prayer will prove, in *your* case, that you have forgiven, or are striving to forgive, those whom to forgive is most difficult; those whom indeed you could not forgive, with-

out drinking deeply of the fountain of Christian charity. Are there any other persons, whose recollection preys upon your spirits, and disturbs that tranquillity of mind, with which you should prepare for the Sacrament, and still more for the last awful act of death?"

"Yes, Sir," she replied; "but since I have opened my inmost thoughts to *you*, this very hour, and have been instructed, and counselled, and comforted, by your conversation; I am sensible that I am become a different creature; and I think, I can say, without any fear of mistaking my sentiments, that every spark of the unchristian spirit of revenge is quenched and dead within me. Yet there is another, Sir, almost as guilty as the former, and more cruel towards *me*, who still lives; who knows into what distress I am plunged through *him*; who leaves me to my wretched fate, although much and often entreated to help me; who refuses to come near me even to receive my forgiveness; who denies that he is the father of my child, and so turned it adrift on the wide world to perish in want and perhaps in sin. Ah! my poor dear children! Fatherless ye are already: orphans ye will be soon! your mother will quit you not many days hence!"

Here she was overwhelmed by a complication of sorrows, and could utter no more. Her mo-

ther and sister in-law, both in tears, supported her, whilst she coughed with such extreme violence as to be in danger of an immediate dissolution. I observed that she threw up great quantities of blood. The interval however was favourable to myself, as it gave me leisure to compose my spirits, and to consider in what manner I might best endeavour to console her.

A calm being at length restored, I said, "it is very natural that you should be anxious for the welfare of your children; and you seem to leave them certainly in a very unprotected and friendless condition. But how many have been brought safely on their way by God's kind and watchful Providence, when they had neither shoes, nor scrip, nor staff! And your poor destitute children have acquired a peculiar claim to his fostering care. To such he has made an especial promise, that he himself will be their Father. Can any thing be more beautiful; more cheering and refreshing to the afflicted spirit; more adapted to alleviate the pang of the departing parent; than those expressions of Scripture, that he is the Father of the fatherless; that in him the fatherless find mercy; that he will judge the cause of the poor and fatherless; and when he says himself, leave thy fatherless children to *me;* I will preserve them alive. Reflect on these gracious declarations,

and they cannot but be sweet and consolatory to your heart. Your children, you see, will not be desolate and abandoned. They will lose indeed a weak earthly parent; but they will gain an Almighty Parent in heaven."

She raised her eyes, and clasped her hands, and seemed to pray with fervency, that God might indeed be the preserver and guide of her children, and take them into his own safe and holy keeping; and, "what," she said, "could I have expected but sin and evil, if they had been left under the roof of those, who ought indeed to have sheltered them, because they gave them being, but who would have brought them up, as I know too well, neither in the fear of God, nor in the belief of their Saviour. We come therefore always to the same end, that God knows best, and does all for our good. His will be done! But I hope, Sir, when they are ripe for it, you will take my poor children into your school, and let them be taught their religion; and to worship God. I was taught these things, and I went astray; but I feel the benefit of them now, when it might have been too late to learn them. Ah! Sir, how many persons have I known, even in my short course of wickedness, who have died without the faith of Christ, and without the fear of God, with curses on their lips and horror in their hearts!"

"It is too painful," I said, "even to think upon; but we will endeavour at least to rescue your poor children from such a fate. As a matter of course, being in the poor-house, they will be sent to school, till they are able to do something for themselves; and they will be taught their duties to God and their fellow-creatures. I wish all were as anxious about it, as you now are." Then turning to her sister-in-law I seized upon the opportunity afforded me, of reminding her that she had one son now of the fit age for instruction, and I besought her to send him to the school. "You see," I said, "what is the opinion of your afflicted sister; and she is in a state to make her opinions most worthy of attention. She is now able to discern what has been most useful to her of all the circumstances of her present life; namely, that alone which did something to prepare her for the next. And she perceives now that the next life is every thing to her, and this life nothing. We are too blind to perceive it; but let us trust *her*, and be guided by her. Besides, if you have any regard for your own comfort in this world, and for your everlasting state in the world to come, you will do what you can to give your children good principles; for, if not, they will be a constant sting to you here, and they will be the first to accuse you hereafter."

Mrs. Barton, the mother, shuddered at the recollection of her own negligence in this particular, and joined with her sick daughter in pressing the younger Mrs. Barton to listen to my advice, which she professed to be very willing to do; but at present, she said, they were all at sixes and sevens, her husband being in prison and every thing going wrong. "However, Sir," she added, "he will be at home to-morrow, thank the Lord! And I hope his troubles will make him a better man; and if *you*, Sir, would be so kind as to speak a word to him, it might do much good."

"I shall consider it to be my duty to do so," I replied; "but I will tell you what I think may be much more useful. He will come without doubt to visit his poor sister here; all her brothers, I presume, will come; and if God would but give you strength to speak to them about the courses which they have taken," I said, turning to the sick woman herself, "*you* might prevail when I could not. They will be quite sure that you are sincere in what you say, and they will see how deeply interested you are for the salvation of their souls. They might suspect the parson as only speaking in the way of his trade, and not really caring what becomes of them; but, God knows, I should rejoice greatly to hear that they reformed their lives,

and turned out new men. Can you undertake this Christian, this sisterly office; and thus endeavour to impress upon your brothers, that there is no real substantial pleasure, but in having good reason to think, that God will pardon them for Christ's sake; and that if they proceed in their former habits he will be a consuming fire to destroy them?"

"I had already thought of doing so, Sir," she answered immediately; "and now you recommend it, I will certainly do it, if God spare my life and give me an opportunity. Besides, you know, Sir, if I could but succeed, it might please God to accept it of me, as a good work, in this my helpless condition, when I seem unable to do him any service at all." "Yes, indeed," I said, "it will be so, whether you succeed to the extent of your wishes or not. And if there be any other persons, not of your own family, with whom you have been closely acquainted, and who are still pursuing the broad way to destruction both of body and soul, if by speaking or writing to them, you could awaken them to a sense of their danger, and induce them to break off their sins, this no doubt would be an act well-pleasing to God, and a most excellent use of the time, which may be yet allotted to you in this world. In general the sick and the dying can only practice what are

called the passive virtues, the virtues of meekness, and patience, and contentment, and resignation; and very difficult are they to practice, and very lovely to behold, both for God and man; and they are what your blessed Saviour practised before you. But you may go beyond this, and be actively good, and in some sense undo a part at least of the evil which you have occasioned by your example; by making it known to your former companions in vice, that you now abhor it, and that you have learnt, fatally by your own experience, that the wages of sin is death, and that there is no peace to the wicked, but in renouncing their errors, and turning from Satan to God."

As I spoke thus, her countenance seemed to be faintly illumined, like an evening-cloud by the last beam of the parting sun. It was a little glimmering of joy, which sprung from the idea, that she might yet do some good in her generation, and attest thus more effectually the sincerity of her own repentance. After enjoying this thought for a few moments she exclaimed, "Ah! Sir, how shall I be able to do all this, lying here on my sick-bed, my hand scarcely firm enough to guide the pen, my understanding at times confused and wandering. However I will pray to God to help me, and to send his Holy Spirit, to put the proper thoughts into my head, and to

teach me the most proper words, that I may convince and persuade those to whom I speak or write, not to delay so long as I have done the difficult and painful task of repentance."

"Do so," I said; "and God will both give you strength, and afterwards accept your works, as if they were all your own; and cheer yourself with this Scripture, that they who convert a single sinner from the error of his ways, shall shine as the stars for ever. And now, (for I see you are exhausted by this long conversation) I shall take my leave for the present, and will return in the afternoon with every thing necessary for the Sacrament. With regard to the third point of self-examination, whether the communicants intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways, I am perfectly satisfied. You have given me every test of it that can be given in your situation; and I am sure, where deeds are absolutely impossible, our gracious God will accept the will in their stead. I have therefore now only to ask who are prepared to communicate with you; the rules of our Church require two persons." "Let me be one, Sir, if you please," said old Mrs. Barton; "I know I am not worthy; but God perhaps will make me more so; and it would be a comfort to *me*, and my daughter too, to receive the

Sacrament together." Tears accompanied this speech, and there was every air of sincerity about it; so I admitted her at once; only observing, that she had already heard from my lips, what was the nature of the responsibility, which she took upon herself, by eating Christ's body, and drinking his blood; and expressing my anxious wish, that, by complying with Christ's ordinance, she might hereafter be a partaker of all the benefits of his death. Then turning to the young Mrs. Barton I enquired what were her intentions. She declined the rite immediately, as I supposed she would, and as indeed I wished she might; being convinced that she did not understand the meaning of it, and that probably she would reap no advantage from it in her present state. I said however that I hoped she would soon know more about her religion, and then perhaps the reasons which she now assigned for declining the Sacrament, namely, the troubles of her family, would be the very reasons to urge her to have recourse to the holy table of her Lord for comfort, for consolation and for strength. Thus there being but one in the family to communicate with the sick woman, I said, there was a poor young girl, a very near neighbour, who had been long ill, but was now so much better as to be capable of being brought out without danger; and that I had

prepared her for the Sacrament; and that I knew she would be very glad to take advantage of such an opportunity; so the hour being fixed, and every other arrangement made, I took my leave, desiring that my patient should be kept quiet and undisturbed till my return. Having called upon the young girl immediately afterwards, I mentioned the appointment to her, which she readily promised to keep; telling me that she would get a neighbour to wheel her there in a little child's chair which she had often used.

At the hour agreed upon we assembled in the sick chamber. It had been cleaned out, and every thing superfluous was removed. By the side of the bed stood a small table, on which I spread the napkin, out of my Sacrament-basket, and afterwards the rest of its contents. The wine was in a small bottle with a piece of leather tied over the cork; the bread was wrapped up in white paper; and there were a glass and plate to receive them for the ceremony. A pillow was placed by the side of the table for myself to kneel upon; Mrs. Barton and the young girl knelt at the foot of the bed; the sick person was in an elevated posture, supported on all sides by the bed-clothes, but still apparently faint and wearied, as if the labour and hurry of the preparation had been too much for her feeble

frame and spirits. She had probably been lifted from the bed, whilst the bed itself was re-arranged, and her own linen had been changed. On the whole things were much more decent than could have been expected; and the preparation of mind in my poor patient, discovering itself in every feature, was as perfect as could be wished. During the administration of the solemn rite she gave a thousand tokens of devotion; and especially, when she received the bread and wine, her ejaculations were fervent, and manifestly came from the heart. Again and again she exclaimed, "Christ Jesus, have mercy upon me! O my blessed Redeemer, save my soul! Reconcile me, I beseech thee, to my Heavenly Father!" Her piety, and the whole of her conduct affected us deeply. The old mother and the young girl wept and sobbed. I myself was frequently interrupted by my feelings; and when the ceremony was over, without making a single observation, I went away in tears.

It so happened, from a variety of circumstances, that I did not visit the cottage again for two days. Immediately upon entering the sick-room I perceived, that a lamentable alteration had taken place: and that the sufferings of the poor woman were heavier and more uninterrupted. Her respiration was difficult and more

painful than ever. Her senses however were perfect, and she was still able to speak, though not very plainly, nor many words at a time. Upon first seeing me she said nothing; but her lips quivered, and her face was slightly convulsed. I did not know, whether she meant to reproach me for my seeming neglect of her; or whether, conscious of her own change for the worse, she thought that it would give me pain to perceive it. Her hand was lying on the bed-clothes; I took it into mine, and said, "I am truly sorry not to have been able to see you these two last days, and now to find you in so great distress." "Ah, Sir," exclaimed her mother, "if it might please God to take her!" "No," I interrupted her, "we must wait his own good time. He is wiser than *us*, and knows best when it will be fit to release her. He may have determined to try her patience to the utmost for *our* advantage, and for her's; to wean her entirely from this world, and to qualify her for a richer reward in the next. I would scarcely venture therefore to pray to God to release her. By my own folly, if my prayer were granted, I might deprive her of a nobler crown proportioned to her sufferings. And what saith St. Paul? The time of this affliction is but for a moment in comparison with eternity; and the very heaviest affliction is light in comparison

with the exceeding weight of bliss and glory which may be purchased with it. I would only pray, therefore, that God would enable her to bear her sufferings, as she does now, with so calm and serene a patience."

Here the sick person, evidently comforted by my observations, herself interposed, and said, with difficulty, "I am content to bear whatever God may lay upon me; blessed be his name! My pains are great; but he upholds me, and does not suffer my faith to fail. And my sins, no doubt, require all this and more to purge them away. But pray for me, Sir, if you please, for I can yet listen, and join with you. And may God bless you for all your goodness, and for the wonderful help which you have given me in my trial of adversity!" This was spoken with many intervening pauses; but her character was strikingly raised as her strength declined, and her troubles increased; by her gratitude to myself I was extremely touched.

I made no direct reply to what she had said, but kneeling down, opened my Prayer-Book in the Psalms, and continued reading therein for about half an hour; she remaining the whole time with closed eyes, and clasped hands, in fixed attention, and now and then repeating a verse after me. After every verse indeed I regularly stopped for an instant or two, to give

her the opportunity of reflection, and of repeating the verse, if she was inclined to do so; and also for my own convenience. For my manner was to read those verses only which suited the case before me, and therefore it was sometimes necessary to run over several with my eye, before I came to one that was applicable; and the regular pause prevented the appearance of searching. I also substituted new words of my own here and there, to bring a sentiment or supplication more home to the bosom and feelings of my patient. This will be found to be a useful practice in most cases; but especially when the sick person has been visited very often, and all the prayers in the appointed office have been read again and again. And I may here observe, that the private manuals of prayers for the visitation of the sick, admirable as some of them are, do not appear to answer their purpose amongst the poor. In general they are not short enough; not sufficiently plain and intelligible; not in the same rhythm and cadence with our authorised prayers; and whenever I attempted to use them, I fancied that they produced little or no effect. But in the Psalms I always found an inexhaustible store of materials, and a slight alteration of single words adapts them to every variety of affliction and understanding.

On the present occasion I began with the sixth, of which very nearly the whole was suitable. In the seventh verse I omitted the last clause, and the concluding verse I omitted altogether; and I made a few verbal alterations in various parts. Then passing to the seventh Psalm, I pronounced only the first clause of the first verse, and went from thence to the eighth Psalm, of which I read the first, fourth, and fifth verses only. In the ninth Psalm I took the first, second, ninth, tenth, and eighteenth verses, being careful always to adapt the tone of my voice to the sentiment, and to pause rather longer between verses of which the sentiments were dissimilar. Thus then, after employing half an hour, I concluded with the prayer for the sick when there appeareth small hope of recovery, the Lord's Prayer, and the benediction. She continued in private prayer for a minute or two after I had finished, and then opening her eyes, and unclasping her hands, she said, "I am quite unable, Sir, to talk to you, or to thank you, with this shortness of breath. Pray, good mother, tell Dr. Warton, before he goes away, what happened here the day before yesterday." "She shall tell me, then," I replied, "in the front room. A little repose and quiet will now be good for yourself." So I gently pressed her hand, and left her.

Old Mrs. Barton having waited to change her daughter's posture in the bed, soon came to me, and communicated all that I was anxious to hear; but not without often wiping her eyes, and often stopping to compose her mind. The story indeed was very affecting, and highly to her daughter's praise. The brothers, it seems, had been discharged from prison, and had come, as we supposed they would, to see their dying sister. Others of the family were also present. She herself, after receiving the sacrament, by which her spirits had been wonderfully comforted and elevated, had enjoyed a good night's rest for a person so situated, and found herself the next morning, as she thought, more refreshed, and more strong than she had been for many days; and thus she was enabled, by God's kind providence, to go through the task which she had undertaken.

As well as I could put things together from the mother's account, she must have addressed her brothers in a manner somewhat like the following; they themselves, it appeared, being generally silent, only assenting to her words by their look, or a single yes, and by no means attempting to argue with her, or to contradict her. "Look at *me*," she said; "William and Richard, and the rest of my brothers! Look at *me!* I have been wasting away, you see, by slow de-

grees, and I shall soon be no more in this world. I may die at any hour, with *my* disorder; I shall certainly die in a few days. You have the best reason, therefore, for believing all that I may say; the dying seldom speak falsely. And, you know well, I am not an old person, brought to the brink of the grave by length of years, and the usual infirmities of age; I am neither deaf, nor blind, nor is my understanding, what God gave me, at all decayed; so that I am not like one who is past all the pleasures of this life, and who would not surprise you, if she said that she cared no more about them. No! I am at the very age for every thing that the foolish world calls enjoyment and pleasure; but I now loathe it all. What good did it ever do me, that which I have seen of it? The evil of it you perceive with your own eyes. It has brought me to an untimely end. It has cut me short in my days, like the flower of the field. But what good did it do me at the time? Laughter, and the song, and the dance, lit up my face, and lifted my spirits to the sky; but it was all false and empty joy; it had nothing solid or lasting about it; in a few hours it was gone. Nay, even whilst it seemed to continue, care was often secretly gnawing the heart. Would this then have been a fit exchange for my soul? The soul is born to live for ever in happiness, or misery; and if

I could have lived a hundred years in these pleasures, without one single care to dash them, would that be a sufficient recompence to my soul for endless years to be spent in misery? No! no! the soul is beyond all value; and to secure the everlasting happiness of the soul, nothing can be too painful, or too terrible to undergo, whilst we are here. Hunger, and thirst, and cold, and nakedness, and pain, and all the evils of the most abject poverty in this world, which we so eagerly shun, are quite contemptible, are nothing, if we could but once arrive at Heaven. We should then look back upon the worst calamities and sufferings that this world could bring, with an utter disregard and scorn, and we should wonder that we ever troubled and vexed ourselves about them. We should perceive how little space they took up in our whole existence, and how completely they were swallowed up and lost in eternity. Eternity never ends! Think of this but for a moment; and you will know at once, that every thing else, set in the scale against it, must be as light as a feather. Nothing, in short, that we plague ourselves about, is of any good consequence, unless it brings us nearer to God and Heaven. Riches, or poverty; mirth, or sorrow; it matters not what comes, if it turns to our everlasting welfare. If all this be so then, and

it cannot be denied; what can be said, my brothers, of your course of life? I ask, where will it lead you? To Heaven? Be sure not. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. To the bottomless pit of fire? I shudder when I name it. What must it be to be cast into it? But whither will your course of life lead you in this world? Is there any one part of it that deserves the name of pleasure? You may go to the alehouse, and drown your troublous thoughts in drunkenness; but is drunkenness itself a pleasure? Drunkenness, which is usually attended with quarrelling, and swearing, and fighting; or perhaps with lying, and cheating, and stealing, to supply the constant calls for drink? But if not, can it be a pleasure to lose your reason; to ruin your health; to be seen staggering through the streets; to be followed and hooted at by the children; perhaps to be put in the stocks; to find your families starving at home; your wives pawning their clothes to buy bread; your children shivering with nakedness; and then, at last, if not before, to be driven by desperation to unlawful courses, which end in the jail, or the whip, or an ignominous death. This is the usual progress of the drunkard, and he who finds pleasure in any step of it, must have a strange sense of pleasure. Ah! my brothers! it is to put yourselves below the level of men,

and to rank with the brute beasts. God above too has strictly and awfully forbidden it; your own consciences within you cry out against it; it cannot therefore prosper here; it will be dreadfully punished hereafter. Oh! listen to the warning voice of your dying sister! Flee drunkenness, as you would flee a serpent; it has been the cause of all your other sins. But God yet spares you, that you may repent. Jesus Christ his Son invites you to pursue the paths of holiness. Obey *him*, and *he* will save your souls in the terrible day of judgment."

This is all that I can now recollect to have heard from Mrs. Barton, as having been actually spoken by her daughter, and which, even in this imperfect form, I thought too good to be lost; but she must have spoken, no doubt, much more than this, and with much greater force, speaking as she did, in very short sentences, with perpetual questions, and fixing her brothers down to every point. They stood by her bed for an hour or upwards; and except the necessary pauses to regain her breath and strength, she was never silent for many minutes together. She ceased at last from complete exhaustion. When Mrs. Barton had finished her story, "This," I said, "was very forcible preaching; the hand of death being almost visible, and ready to strike the Preacher herself; how did your

sons bear it?" "Oh, Sir," she replied, "they cried over her like children, and though they made her no promises, yet I think it must do them good." "I wish it may do so," I rejoined; "and if it does not, whenever it comes into their thoughts, it will lash them with scorpions. But tell me, was your husband present?" "Yes, Sir, he was," she answered, "but he was too deaf to hear much, and I fear he understood still less. He, however, shed tears because the rest did; and I will tell him all that I can remember at my leisure, and bid him consider that it was spoken by his dying daughter, whom he used to love the best of all his children." "You will do well to do so," I said; "and I heartily pray that God may bless these exertions of your penitent daughter to the improvement of you all, and to the salvation of her own soul as well as your's!" "God grant it," she answered fervently; "but I had almost forgotten to tell you, Sir, this was not all my daughter did on the same day. She wrote two letters besides, which however she did not shew me; and to-day there has been a young woman here in consequence of one of those letters, and she was alone with my daughter for some time. What passed between them I do not know; but the stranger came out with red and swoln eyes, and I hope will be the better for it." "I hope so too," I said; "and

at all events, I am sure that your poor daughter has done the best she can to atone for her faults. Properly speaking, indeed, nothing that we can do can atone for the very least of our faults; all *that* must be left to Christ, who alone is sufficient for it; but God requires these things of us, as the fruits of our faith, and the proofs of our sincerity. Your daughter has given these proofs to the very utmost of her power; and I think she will be sealed for one of God's children, and a joint-heir with Christ, against the day of redemption." "Bless you, Sir," she exclaimed aloud, "bless you again and again, for the comfort which you have given to my old heart!"

At this moment the younger Mrs. Barton rushed out of the sick room, and interrupted our conversation with the sad tidings, that our poor patient was seized with a fit, and apparently in the agonies of death. We followed her back into the chamber with hurried steps, and found her account to be too true. The dying woman was struggling for breath. I knelt down, and repeated the commendatory prayer; the rest supported her. She recovered for an instant, and became quite calm, and breathed gently. At length also she opened her eyes, and manifestly knew all around her; and she saw *me* upon my knees, and with a faint smile seemed to acknow-

ledge the sacred duty that I was performing. I reached out my hand, and took hold of one of her's, and said, "The Lord Jesus receive thy spirit! Into his hands I commit it, as into the hands of a most merciful and a most mighty Saviour!" She pressed my hand, and just moved her lips, and expired. If her tongue had not refused its office, she would have said, "Amen."

After rising upon my feet, and silently contemplating the corpse for a few minutes, I cried, "Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord!" And then turning to the weeping bystanders, I said, "let us kneel again, and pray, not for *her*, who is now I trust amongst the blessed spirits, but for ourselves, that we may die the death of the righteous. This having been done, I rose once more, and hastily withdrew; revolving, as I walked homeward, the series of my ministerial labours, which, for once, had terminated, as I thought, so happily, and with God's blessing upon them.

After the funeral, at which the whole family were present, in a few days I set out to visit them; intending to enforce the serious reflections, which the late awful event was so calculated to suggest. Old Mrs. Barton, to whom I first went, was busily engaged in removing from her cottage. Going in, and being for a moment alone

with her, I enquired the reason. "It was your own advice, Sir," she answered, "when I first saw you. But I will tell you the truth; my daughter, that is gone, advised me so too. 'Mother,' she said, 'you are getting into years; you cannot be long here; you should be thinking, often and seriously, of that hereafter which is soon to come, and which will last for ever. This is an ill-suited place for such serious thoughts; disturbed by constant broils, to which peace and quiet are utter strangers. Every day you see and hear too much to shock and distract the mind of one preparing for eternity. Look out, when I am gone, for some quiet decent cottage in the fields, and there abide till God shall call you to follow me. Oh! may we meet again in Heaven!' So she spoke, Sir, and I determined at the time to follow her counsel; and you see I am now doing it."

"I am glad of it," I replied; "and I hope also that you will do every thing else, which either I or your daughter have counselled, or which your afflictions, sent by God himself, have put into your head, as being right and good; and it was for the very purpose of saying this, that I now came to see you. But you are too busy to be able to talk calmly; I will go on to your son William. Am I likely to find him at home?" "He has just left me, Sir," she an-

swered; "he has been helping me to move my things, and I expect him back soon." I hastened away, and knocked at his door. It was opened by the eldest boy, and I saw at once the whole family seated at dinner, round a small table; the two youngest on the laps of their father and mother, who were feeding them with potatoes, which, with some bread, seemed to be their only fare. The potatoes were in a large dish on the middle of the table; there was no table-cloth; and there was that appearance of wretchedness in every thing around, which was to be expected in the case of a man, who had six children, and was just returned from a jail.

As I entered, I took off my hat. Mrs. Barton, being an old acquaintance, rose from her seat with the child in her arms. He continued sitting with his hat on his head, but suspended his dinner to hear what I was about to say. "I intended," I said, "to have had a little talk with you, if I had found you at leisure; but I will not trouble you now, as you are at dinner. I will call another time." "Oh! it is no matter," replied William Barton; "you see what we have got; it will not spoil by waiting; but there is little enough for so many of us." "It seems so indeed," I answered. "Here take this," and I put a crown piece into his hand, "take this; and let your wife get some shins of beef, and a

little bacon, and some leeks, and make you a good supper of hot savoury soup; and I warrant you your children will be very happy, and sleep well after it." On this he put the child from his lap on the floor, and rose up, and took off his hat, and said, "thank you, Sir." "Yes, William," said his wife, "and you must thank the Gentleman too for what he did for us, whilst you were away." "Well, I do then," he replied, "thank you, Sir; thank you for all favours!"

Whilst this passed, I had an opportunity of observing him. He was very tall, and rather thin. His hair was black, like old Barton's; and would have hung down, long and straight like his, if it had not been cropped. From his ears, however, to his mouth the hair and beard together had been suffered to grow, so as to form prodigious terrific whiskers; the whole of his throat was also thickly covered with black hair. His appearance was altogether very savage; but the features of his countenance, upon examination, did not correspond to his figure, and betokened nothing particularly ferocious. I knew, however, that when his passions were roused by drink, or any other cause, he would not hesitate to commit any crime. Against myself, it is probable that he was in some degree exasperated, as I had boldly reproved him, in the committee of relief, for his improper mode of life; and per-

haps he attributed his imprisonment chiefly to my exertions in my office of Chairman of the Association for the prosecution of Felons. However, his wife, having received assistance from me during his absence, had now softened his feelings towards me, and my present well-timed bounty had apparently completed the conquest. But to keep him in better order by the expectation of future favours, I told him that I should always be happy to help him in his difficulties; and difficulties he *must* have sometimes with six children; and that from himself I neither expected nor wished any thing more, than that he should endeavour to justify my assistance of him, by sending his children to school, as they became old enough for it, and by getting into some regular mode of industry for the maintenance of *them* and his wife. "But I will not interrupt you any longer now," I said; "so good bye to you all. I shall have other opportunities." However, no opportunities occurred immediately of pursuing the conversation into other important matters; but it appeared that he was conforming to my advice; the eldest boy came to school, and he himself hired his services to one of the farmers, who was disposed to encourage him by good wages. In my walks I sometimes met him, when he always acknowledged me by a bow; and he was generally considered

to be much improved. At home, however, when I called at his house, things appeared to be very untidy and uncomfortable, and not such as to make a husband eager to come there rather than go to the alehouse. Nor was this altogether the fault of the wife. His wages, though good, were not sufficient to lodge, feed, and clothe eight people; and consequently she was obliged to go out daily to weed in the grounds, or to wash for the laundresses, or at private houses. Meanwhile the children were left to do as they liked, and became ragged; and all sorts of filth and dirt accumulated in the house. This might have been very easily avoided in the case of a small family; but, where there were many children, cleanliness, and good order, and comfort, seemed hopeless.

From William Barton I went to Richard; but he was not to be found; nor did I meet with him for a long time. Not being encumbered with such a family as his brother's, his cart had not been sold during his imprisonment, and having raised money enough to buy a donkey, he had returned to his old trade of dusting and boning; from which I prognosticated that he would soon relapse into his former habits of profligacy.

There were two other sons married and settled at a greater distance, whom I had never seen but at the funeral; and there were also

three more, having no fixed places of abode, being unmarried, and lodging for a day here, and a day there, and never to be seen by *me* but by accident. They jobbed about as they could, and when out of work were ready for any mischief. I had no means of getting at them, but through their mother; and those means were, I believe, entirely useless. In point of fact, one of them absconded some time afterwards, in consequence of a burglary, in which he was concerned. The rest of the party were apprehended, tried, convicted, and transported beyond the seas. But one of the chief witnesses having died, young Barton re-appeared in the parish, and being brought to trial was acquitted. But I am anticipating the course of events.

SECTION II.

RICHARD BARTON.

Things continued in the state described above for several months, when one night a woman appeared before the committee, who applied for relief for Richard Barton, stating that she was his wife. She was known by the name of Phœbe, and a member of the committee, acquainted with the circumstances, asked her where she was

married; and then a discussion arising, she was compelled to confess, that she was not married at all. Upon this she was dismissed with a severe rebuke, and without any relief. Presently however Richard himself appearing, and it being clearly ascertained that he was ill, it was thought advisable to relieve him now, as he had been so often refused in former times, when he had not ill health to plead. The relief however being small, and his disorder having fallen into his leg, and being likely to be of long duration, Phœbe came to my house to petition me in his behalf, both that I might intercede with the committee, and that I might also assist them privately.

This Phœbe was a pretty, but a wicked woman. She had three children; and of the two last Richard Barton was the ostensible father; they having lived together as man and wife for about three years, in which period those children were born. Having gone into the hall to speak to her, and having heard her story, I asked her how she could think of coming to the Parson in *her* circumstances, living with a man to whom she was not married. "Dear! Sir," she answered, "why I am as true to him, as if I had been to Church with him; and so what does it signify?" "If you are really true to him, the people sadly belie you, Phœbe," I said. "So they do, Sir," she rejoined; "they will say any

thing out of spite and malice." "But whom am I to believe?" I asked. "You know, Phœbe, that I cannot believe *you* any more, after the shameful falsehoods that you once told me about this, that, and the other; and falsehoods, which you must be certain, that I should detect in a few hours; so that you must have lied for the sake of lying, and almost with the intention of shewing me that you had no regard for truth whatever. You never look into your Bible, or perhaps you might have read there, that the lying lip is but for a moment. The liar is sure to be found out, and then will never be believed afterwards."

"I confess, Sir," she answered, "that I did once tell you a lie, and that I was wrong in doing so; but it was a long while ago, and I was in the greatest distress; so I hope you will forget it, and what I now tell you is the very truth, and no lie." "So then," I said, "you think there is no harm in living unmarried with any man, provided you keep to him alone." "I hope not," she answered; not speaking so positively as before. "Then you doubt about it, do you?" I enquired. "If so, I must tell you, that when you do a thing about which you doubt, whether it be right or wrong, you are guilty of sin, and liable to punishment at the hand of God. And I think you must at least have doubted

about *this;* for why should it be the general custom for women to marry, unless there were some good reason for it? Are *you* wiser than all other people, so as to have found out what they never found out, that marriage was not worth a pin, and all nonsense? Ah! Phœbe, Phœbe, this is very bad."

She was abashed; but, as I clearly saw, not convinced; so I asked her, whether she would think it innocent and harmless to live with a married man, on the mere condition of being true to him. "No, Sir," she answered immediately; "I am not so bad as *that* however; *that* would be adultery, I know very well." "Aye," I said; "and adultery is very wicked indeed; is it not?" "Yes, Sir," she replied, "it must be so. But I am free from *that.*" "I am glad of it," I said; "but what do you think of fornication? Is not fornication a crime too? And has not God forbidden fornication as well as adultery?" "Yes, Sir," she answered, "I believe he has; but *that* does not concern *me.*" "Not concern *you?*" I asked, "Why do not men and women commit fornication, when they live together without being married?" "I never understood it so, Sir," she answered; "if I had, I am sure I would not have consented to live with Richard Barton." "Oh, then," I said, "you think it to be fornication perhaps, only when

men and women go casually together; one man with any number of different women; and one woman with any number of different men; and not when a single man and a single woman keep steadily together in the same house." "That is what I mean exactly, Sir," she replied; "and *that* is all that I do." Upon this she resumed her unbashful look, and appeared rather to triumph, as if it were now decidedly ascertained that she stood on good firm ground.

"Well," I said, "I hope it *may* be all that *you* do; because there is a difference in crimes, and some are greater than others. But tell me, how long do you reckon that a man and woman should live together to escape the guilt of fornication?" This question puzzled her, and she hesitated how to answer; so I asked her, if she reckoned a week sufficient. "No, Sir," she said, "*that* I do not; nor a month neither." "So then," I rejoined, "for the first month the man and woman would be fornicators; or at least you would not know what to call them during that time; and you must wait to see how they behave afterwards, before you can find a proper name for them. This will never do, Phœbe. This system of your's is too loose and uncertain; and a pretty pass the world would soon come to, if we were all to practise it. When men and women marry, they marry for life, do they not?"

"Yes, Sir," she answered. "And can they separate when they like," I asked again, "and enter into other marriages at their pleasure?" "No, Sir," she replied; "I believe they might be punished, if they did." "Yes," I said, "they would be transported out of the kingdom, as being unfit to live in it, after attempting to bring such strange confusion into families. But you and Richard may separate when you please, and marry whom you please, without being punished for it; may you not?" She could not deny it. "So that," I continued, "as you have had one child by one man, and two children by Richard, you may go to a third, and have three children by *him*, and so on; and then, if you are tired at last of this roving system, you may marry for life, so far as the law is concerned. And is it possible that you can think all this right? Who is to take care of the children? Will each supposed father quietly keep those that were born in his house, whilst you were with him? And if he refuses to do it, and throws them upon the parish, what will become of you then? Will not the officers, very likely, get you sent to Bridewell, as a lewd wanton woman?" "I shall take care of *that*, Sir," she answered. "I and Richard have tried one another now for three years, and we suit very well, and have no wish to change. The first

man did not suit; we quarrelled, and he beat me; so I ran away; and it was very lucky for me that I was not married to him."

"Aye, aye, Phœbe, I see what you are about," I said; "it is very clear to *me*, that if Richard should offend you, you would be off immediately to some other man, if you could find another man in the world to take and try you. And can you be so blind as not to see that this is as bad a system of fornication as can be, and what God has most awfully threatened in the Bible that he will punish hereafter with fire and brimstone?" "I hope I am not so wicked, Sir, as to be punished in that manner," she replied. "When I went to the other man, I intended to live with him as long as he or I lived; and I intend the same with Richard. If I had come to Richard, only to try him first, whether he suited me, and then to act accordingly, I should have been in the wrong, I dare say, though I know many women who do so." "And what do people call such women?" I asked. "And what do they call their children? Does any body scruple to give them the most disgraceful names, which I am ashamed to mention? And the poor children are in trouble about it all their lives, and are in perpetual fear of being pointed at as base born persons, and called bastards by every enemy. See what you are laying up for yourself, and for *them*. Indeed

it is already come upon you. Richard is sick, and cannot work; the officers consider him to be a single man, and they relieve him accordingly. You and the children must starve; or, if you apply for help in your own person, you acknowledge your children to be bastards, and you must expect to be treated as the other bad women are, who burden the parish with bastards. This is a sad business; and yet you say that your intention is to live with Richard as long as he or you live. Why then not marry? How can I possibly believe you? When your character is at stake; when you are in danger from the law of the land; when God threatens you with future judgments; when all these things are brought upon you by not marrying; will any body believe you, when you say, that you never intend to desert Richard, as you deserted the other man?"

She held down her head, and was silent; she was rather ashamed, as I thought, than unable to attempt to answer me. So I proceeded, "God made men and women superior to other animals; but you would degrade yourself down to a level with them; you would go and live with the men, like cats and dogs, and other brute beasts, cohabit with one other. Will God bless such unhallowed doings as these? It cannot be. No! If you would have *his* blessing, without which there

can be no true happiness in this world or the next, you must come to his holy house, and kneel before him; and make your solemn vows to fulfil, with *his* help, the various duties of a faithful wife; and join with the Minister of Christ in imploring God's favour towards you, and then receive, through the Minister's hands, the sacred pledge of union with your husband, the ring, I mean; and which, I perceive, you presume to wear, without any just right or title to it whatever; pretending to be married, because you know that all decent persons will scout you from their society, if they find that you are not."

Thus I was running on, but here she interrupted me, as if unable to bear these hard blows, and said, she would willingly be married to Richard, and indeed had long wished it, but that they had always been too poor to pay the fees. "Oh! very well!" I answered. "Then you shall have that excuse no longer. I will be answerable for all the fees. When shall the banns be published?" "As soon as you please, Sir," she replied, "when Richard is able to come so far." "Remember then," I said, "on this condition, and on this alone, do I consent to help you in your distress. Take this (giving her money,) and go, and sin no more." Thus I dismissed her.

Things proceeded in this manner for some time. Phœbe came to me now and then for pecuniary aid, reporting that Richard was getting better, and that the marriage was fully agreed upon. Meanwhile, I had myself seen him several times crawling about with his sore leg, but never at home, nor in any situation in which it would have been convenient to enter into a serious conversation with him. I did indeed sometimes stop persons in the streets and roads, when my chief business with them could be transacted in a few words, and nobody was passing to overhear me. If I met, for instance, a man or woman, who had been at Church the Sunday before, and was rarely to be seen there, I expressed my pleasure on the occasion, and my hopes of a future more regular attendance. Or, if a regular Church-goer had been absent, I shewed that I was aware of it, and mentioned my fears that there might have been some sickness in the family. If I saw a man idle, I lamented that he was out of work; and if I saw another generally disposed to be idle, but then at work, I exhorted him to keep his place. To parents also, whether they sent their children regularly and decently to school, or not, it was a fruitful subject for a passing observation; and a thousand other cases may readily be imagined,

in which the Clergyman of the Parish might do well to shew that he takes an interest. He will offend some by his rebukes, or by his questions implying censure; but he will acquire authority, and extend the range of his usefulness. Offences of this kind must come, and in a large population very often, if the Clergyman does his duty. By avoiding such offences he may be popular, but comparatively he will do but little good; and none will be awed into better behaviour by the consciousness that his eye is upon them.

This being my practice then, nothing more effectual passed between myself and Richard during this interval. I expected his recovery, and marriage. After a time he ceased to apply to the committee for parochial relief, and Phœbe to *me* for private charity; and upon enquiry I found that *he* was got well, and that *she* was run off to another man. Early one morning, however, I was surprised with a visit from old Mrs. Barton. She herself had, I think, been gradually improving in many respects since her daughter's death, and her own removal from her former place of abode; but I did not yet thoroughly comprehend her character. With her sons she had no influence whatever, although by her own account they were always very kind to her. No doubt she had shared in, or winked at many of their enormities before; but now I believe she

was sincere in her wishes that they might change their modes of life. But alas! their habits were too rooted to be overturned by *her* wishes, or by any remonstrances on *her* part; and the impressive, affecting admonitions of their dying sister were forgotten, or neglected. Even William, the eldest, and upon the whole the most decent, had quitted his regular place of work, and returned to his old courses; and the boy was withdrawn from school. The mother herself had never been yet to church with any sort of regularity; and as an excuse for her absence she pleaded the declining state of her health. It *was* declining certainly, but it did not appear to *me* to be so much impaired, as to justify the absenting herself from public worship. She was not therefore upon the very best terms with me just at present.

However I went to see what she wanted with me. Upon reaching her she said, "I hope you will not take it amiss, Sir, that I am come to your house to beg a great favour of you." Deep dismay was in her countenance. "By no means," I answered; "what is it?" "Ah! Sir," she replied, "my poor son Richard, that was ill so long with a sore leg, and was thought to be well again, is seized with a pleurisy, and the doctor tells me that he will be a dead man in a day or two. God have mercy on his soul!"

"Amen!" I said. "Would you have me visit him, or what?" "Yes, Sir," she answered; "that is what *I* want, and what *he* wants too. Ignorant as he is, and wicked as he may have been, he knows that he has a soul to save, and he is dreadfully troubled about it. But will you be so kind, Sir? I would not send a message to you, Sir; but I determined to come myself to explain matters a little; because I was frightened lest you should refuse to come to such a place after all that has passed." This I did not now precisely understand; so I said, "if you mean that your poor son is a very great sinner, *that* will be the stronger reason with *me* for going to see him. He, whose minister I am, ate and drank and talked with the worst sinners; and forbade none to come to him. Indeed he made it his business to seek and to save those who were lost; lost, humanly speaking; lost, but for *him*. Shall the servant then refuse to do what his master did? The master too having done it of his own accord, and out of pure benevolence; the servant being bound to do it by his office, and encouraged by the promise of the noblest rewards, if he do it faithfully? Go home; and I will follow you with what speed I can. Did you ever hear of my having declined to visit the sick and dying, because they were wicked?" "No, Sir, in truth," she answered, "I never did.

God bless you for it, and spare my son to repent, as my dear daughter did, under your teaching and comfortable doctrine!" "My doctrine is not mine," I said; "but the doctrine of our blessed Saviour, Jesus Christ. The misfortune is, that the friends of the sick too often send for *me*, when it is so late that nothing can be done. I hope this may not be the case with your son. Hasten, and prepare him for my coming." "I will go, Sir," she replied, as she took leave, "as fast as my poor old limbs will carry me;" and so she hobbled off with a brighter countenance.

It was the height of summer, and very hot. My patient was lodged in the same house with his brother William; he above, William with his wife and six children below; and it was necessary to pass through William's chamber to get at Richard's. The staircase was low, narrow, dark and winding; so that it demanded no small care or constant use to mount it with safety. The head was to be stooped, and the body bent, and one hand at least firmly fastened to any thing that accidentally projected from either side. But to increase the difficulties, the stairs themselves were in a tumble-down condition; every step quaked under my feet; one step was half gone, leaving a wide gaping chasm, to the imminent hazard of a leg; and just in the angle where one might have expected to stand

and breathe for a moment with freedom, there stood a large sack apparently full of potatoes. Nevertheless all was surmounted without damage, and I emerged into the sick room, the stench of which was overpowering. If I had been later, some of the disagreeable smells perhaps would have been cleared away; but I had followed the mother so quick as to give them no time for any extraordinary preparation. The chamber itself was small; the window was closed; a fire was burning with a pot or two smoking upon it, and the steam issuing into the chamber; in the corner opposite the door was the bed; on the left hand was a chest of drawers; and all about the floor were scattered the various utensils of a family in the lowest and most wretched poverty.

Upon entering I saw only the mother, and observing that the room was much too close at this season of the year for any person in any disorder, I advanced through it, not without difficulty, and first opened the window; then turning round I beheld the sick man, whom the chest of drawers had hitherto concealed from my view. The sight was afflicting enough.

His complexion first arrested my notice. It was what, I believe, is called livid; a yellowish darkish blue: and it gave me the idea that mortification or putrefaction had already begun.

His whole appearance indeed was such as the great painter has represented that of Lazarus to have been, when he came forth from the tomb, with his grave-clothes on, after having been dead four days. This poor man was wrapped up in blankets from his feet to his neck, his arms also being inclosed within them. He had been lifted from his bed into his present situation upon two chairs, where he was placed nearly upright, bolstered on all sides with pillows and rugs. His legs were stretched out before him, and his feet rested upon a stool. He could not lie in bed on either of his sides on account of the acuteness of the pain produced by such a posture. Nor could he lie upon his back without the danger of immediate suffocation. In his present posture he seemed to be in a state of perfect quietude; a quietude which sometimes precedes death, and which I supposed was about to happen now. Thinking therefore that there was nothing else to be done, I knelt at once upon the edge of the stool on which his feet were placed, and began the commendatory prayer. But observing, as I went along, that there was still some life and spirit in his eyes, which were fixed upon me; and that he coughed two or three times with a considerable degree of force; I changed my opinion as to the extremity of the case, and proceeded to repeat the

following prayer for persons troubled in mind or conscience. Not knowing however to what extent the sick man before me was so troubled, I made some alterations here and there that I might be sure to touch his circumstances, and that he might have the better chance of understanding me. I omitted, for instance, the first branch of the second sentence, and I connected the following branch of it with the first sentence in this manner—"Let not," I said, "let not thy wrath lie hard upon him, and trouble not his soul with any despair of thy goodness; thou, O merciful God, hast written thy holy word for our learning;" and so I went on to the end, only changing confidence for trust, and the enemy for the devil.

Being now clearly convinced that he was not dying, I rose from my knees with the intention of reading the exhortation, and looking more attentively at the other persons in the room, I espied Phœbe amongst them, but shrinking into a corner out of my sight, and evidently studious of concealment. What the mother meant now struck me; and for a few moments I was at a loss what course to take for the advantage of those who were assembled. At length having reflected, I assumed a stern look, and said, "What? Are *you* come *here*, Phœbe, to disturb the last hours of this dying man, with your cro-

codile tears, and your other wicked wiles, and your false comforts, which the poor afflicted sinner cannot listen to without the danger of everlasting ruin?" My tone of severity made them all tremble; the woman herself seemed to feel the least; so I proceeded in a still more cutting strain. "Where have you left your third man? Your hundredth, more likely? Husbands, I suppose, you will hardly call them, or be foolish enough to think that any body will take *you* for a wife. But where is your last man? Are you tired of *him* too; or did *he* send you hither?" Not so much abashed as might have been expected she answered; "I have been nowhere, Sir; it is a false story that you have heard from beginning to end; I know nothing of any other man." No doubt but that Richard and Phœbe had hitherto mutually upheld each other in the lies which were for their mutual profit, or seemed to be so; and she might have thought that it was for Richard's profit to uphold her now. Judge then what must have been her surprize, her rage, her terror; when her old abettor, now under different circumstances, and on the verge of another world, threw off the mask; and collecting a strength, which did not seem to belong to him, (he seemed indeed to be speechless before) burst forth, in a hollow, loud, indignant voice, into this positive and harsh denial of her

words—"Thou, liar! I caught thee with Thomas Atkins! I saw thee with these eyes of mine! You were in bed together! Is this a time for lying, Phœbe? The whole street knows it; and I—I—I am a dying man!"

Overpowered by his own dreadful energy, he stopped; and his head sunk upon his breast. I was glad that he had thus done homage to truth; and I approved in my own mind of the course which I had taken, and hoped to be able to prepare him the better for another world. Meanwhile Phœbe, struck at first to the ground by shame and guilt, and then weeping and sobbing with a mixture of grief and passion; but not daring to reply, at length slunk out of the room, before I had determined what to say to her. Thus released from thinking about it, I turned to the man himself, and said, "See how this wicked woman would have you to go on lying or abetting lies to the very last gasp, so as to make you a fit companion in the next world for none but the devil himself and the rest of the evil spirits. The devil was a liar from the beginning; he is the father of all lies; and when he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own, and what is natural to him. What can be more just therefore than that all men who are liars and fond of lying, should go to *him* at the last? To God they cannot go. God is a God of

truth, and cannot lie; and therefore he loves the truth, and all who speak it; and he tells us, therefore, in the Bible, with a most terrible certainty, that every liar being odious and abominable in his sight shall be cast out from his presence into the lake that burneth for ever with fire and brimstone."

These assertions came home to the poor man's conscience, and he began to shew some evident signs of fear and trembling; and he looked up to me, but with half-raised eyes, and with a piteous countenance, as if he would have said, if he had known how to do it properly, "Oh give me some comfort, Sir, if you can; the thought of the next world is too horrible for me to bear?" Whilst I was exploring his wounds therefore to the bottom, I determined to throw in a little balm; and so I continued thus. "Richard, you have done well in refusing to bear that woman out in her lies any longer. Your eyes are now, I trust, beginning to be opened; and God, if you pray to him, will help you forward in your repentance, of which you have just given the first proof. For true repentance is not sorrow only, but a change of actions, desires, and thoughts. In your present state there is but little, God knows! which you can do. One right thing you *have* done. You have reproved the liar; and I hope God will

give you an opportunity before you die to do other right things. If you have done any body an injury, and have it in your power to repair it, do not rest till you have made amends; and if you can do nothing else, send somebody to ask forgiveness for you. If any body has done *you* an injury, let them know that you forgive them; for God will never forgive *you*, unless *you* forgive others. This must be one part of your preparation for the next life. And remember what I heard that your poor dying sister said to you as to the foolishness of all your sinful pleasures when you stand with one foot on the edge of the grave, and look back upon them. Was it not true, what she said to you? What are they worth *now*? When you think *now* about your drinking and your gambling and other worse things, have you any pleasure in thinking also that you have made God your enemy and brought your soul into danger of hell-fire? For it is not the liar only, but the drunkard also, and the fornicator, that God threatens to shut out from heaven for ever. Those indeed are the things which have brought *you* by God's command to your present state. But this is nothing in comparison with what they might bring you to in a future state. Have you not good reason then to hate them? Is it possible, if God were to spare your life, that

you could any more desire such things? Can you bear to think of them even, without being full of anger against yourself for once loving them, like a brute; instead of loving, like a man, and a Christian, the true pleasures of industry and sobriety and purity and honesty and piety, which God loves also, and which he has promised to reward, for Christ's sake, beyond every thing that we are able to hope, or imagine? Try then your thoughts and desires in this manner; and if you feel as I have described, you may be sure that you are repenting as you ought to do; but if not, you must throw yourself upon God's mercy and pray to God without ceasing for his divine grace to enable you to understand and to feel and to do what will be acceptable to him through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Have you prayed to God at all since your sickness?"

"As well as I could," he answered; "but I am no scholar, Sir." "Can you read?" I asked again. "No, indeed, I cannot;" he replied. "Well," I said, "it is no matter now; for you could not do it, if you had been taught ever so much, when you were a child. But somebody must read to you, when you are able to attend to it. Here is your mother; she will not desert you, I know. Take this little book, Mrs. Barton; it is a short, plain, good sermon; (one of

Mayow's which I had printed for distribution amongst the poor) read it to your poor son, bit by bit, so as not to tire him; it will teach him a great deal, short as it is. But," turning again to the sick man, I said, "you must try to pray yourself, and from your heart. It requires no scholarship to do this. It only requires that you should feel your wants, and then your wants would teach you how to pray; and if you felt your wants very deeply, then you would pray with the more feeling and the greater sincerity and earnestness. If you wanted me to give you money for the support of your half-famished children now that you are unable to work for them yourself; if you wanted me to give you a little wine to support your weak sinking body, would you not know how to ask me for them? But what are wine and money to a wretched sinner who is going to meet his God? He wants penitence; he wants pardon; he wants faith and trust in his blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is every thing to him; this only can save him from eternal damnation. It would be strange therefore, if he felt this want, and yet should say that he did not know how to pray to God to supply it. Do you understand me, Richard?" "Yes, Sir," he answered; "and I will do the best I can; I can do no more." "And may God accept it!" I said. "Farewel now;

if *he* please, I will see you again to-morrow—*You* and *I* are both in his hand."

As I quitted the room I beckoned to the old mother to follow me below. ' What I had said to her son had greatly affected her; and before I could speak, she heaped blessings upon me for the pains which I had taken. When she stopped, I explained to her, what were the particulars in the sermon, which I wished her most to attend to; and I desired her besides to read to him, if she had an opportunity, the 15th chapter of St. Luke's Gospel.

This being settled, I next consulted her about temporals; and having given her some money, which was more immediately necessary, and also directed her to send to the rectory for some medicines, and other things; we fell into talk about Phœbe. " What is to become," I said, " of this wretched creature? Will *she* go back to your son, after what has passed? Or will *he* receive her?" " Dear! Sir," she answered; " what can he do in his condition without her? Nobody would wonder, if he should die before night. Then there is my old man at home that wants *me* to do for him; and I am too much broken myself to take care of my son. I have not strength enough to sit up, or even to turn him in his bed; and to move him from his bed to the chairs, and from the chairs to his bed again, re-

quires them all together, Phœbe, and William and his wife, and the rest of his brothers too. And here are three children; what is to be done with them? If Phœbe is turned out, will she take them with her? Or if their father will not part with them, who is to look after them? And Phœbe, Sir, is in a family-way again, six months gone. Was ever any thing so unlucky?" "Was she willing," I asked, "to do the household-work, and attend to the poor children, and nurse Richard, whilst she was here?" "Oh, yes, Sir," she replied, "very willing; and she is a stout woman too; and though so far gone, she can bear a deal of labour." "Well," I said, "in this great distress and difficulty, if she were really penitent for her wickedness, and wished to make some amends for it, by labouring for the dying man, when he can no longer labour for *her*, his children, or himself; if she would now be content to suffer any sort of trouble and pain in nursing him by day and by night, when she can no longer hope to get any thing from him; then something might be said in favour of her remaining here. But will not her presence hinder his prayers, and thereby lessen the possibility of his salvation? You heard what a dreadful lie she told, enough to make one's hair stand on end, but a short time ago. Or do you think, on the contrary, that your son is so far awakened

to his own situation, that he might do *her* some good, by warning her to leave the courses which have brought *him* to the very brink of the pit of destruction? If this were probable we might not be wrong in winking at her stay."

Mrs. Barton eagerly caught at this little twig, which held out the prospect of a great convenience. She had always been too apt to choose the smooth and broad way, though dubious where it might end, rather than the rough and narrow one, which led through trouble and difficulty to distant good. She did so now, but with more plausibility than on some former occasions. "Ah! Sir," she said; "I think it will be so; and you see, Sir, that my poor son will no longer endure her to lie; and if she should attempt any other wickedness, for the same reason he will not bear it; so that being checked she must get better by being with him now. And, as for Phœbe herself, Sir, I believe she told that lie, for fear, if she confessed the truth, you might order her away; and so she would lose the chance of recovering a little character by slaving for him on his death-bed. Besides, Sir, if we turn her out, she must go to the hedges and hovels; for nobody will take her in."

This speech was rather jesuitical; but well knowing, that any other scheme, which I might propose, would not be accepted, I made the best

that I could of this; so I answered, "Let it be done then; but remember; the condition of her stay is, that she gives signs of true penitence, and of a real desire to practice the virtues, that are to be learnt in a sick-room; for the sake of her own improvement, and in order to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, which God may accept through Jesus Christ. Tell her this continually, and let the sound of it be always in her ears." "It shall, Sir," she said; and so we parted.

As I pursued my walk I reflected upon the case of this Richard Barton; and I feared that his ignorance was so great, as to make it impossible to give him a competent idea of the Christian dispensation. His ignorance however was by no means so great as that of many others, whom I had been called upon to visit in their last moments. To some the very name of Jesus Christ was utterly unknown; of salvation itself they knew nothing; they did not comprehend the meaning of the term. This seems incredible. I will relate a fact, the truth of which I can vouch.

A lady of rank and wealth being just settled in the parish, and anxious to do some good amongst the poor people, went into a cottage, and entered into conversation with the woman who lived in it. After talking much about her

temporal matters she came at length to spiritual; and having discovered that this woman never thought of public worship at all, she asked her what hope she had of salvation. But getting no satisfactory answer to this question, she next asked her, who was the person whom God had sent into the world to save it. "Eve, I believe," said the woman. The lady lifted up her hands in astonishment and being quite at a loss how to instruct people in religion with whom she had no ideas in common, and no ground to stand upon, she relinquished the task to *me;* and directed her benevolence into other channels.

In the course of my ministerial labours I have met with the same degree of ignorance in persons of a very advanced age; once in a woman of fourscore years; who told me also, that she had never considered the Church as intended for any but the rich; nor could I, whilst her health continued, persuade her to come there. Afterwards sickness made it impossible. The ignorance of Richard Barton was not of this kind, or degree; and he was alarmed about his destiny in the next world; with respect to which many of the uneducated poor are quite careless even in the moment of death. With Richard therefore there was a tangible point, of great interest to him, from which to set out. And he knew moreover, that Jesus Christ was the Sa-

viour; at least in this sense, that Jesus Christ, in some way or other, could save and deliver wicked men from damnation, if he would. But what was the nature of Christ himself; what was the history of his abode upon earth; in what manner, or by what scheme of wisdom, power, and goodness, he was to save sinners; and what kind of faith or trust was to be reposed in him; with respect to all these Richard's mind was as yet a perfect blank.

Besides, he had not the faculty of speaking to the purpose, or of putting questions for information, like his sister. He had passed his whole life with the very refuse and scum of mankind. No language was so intelligible to him as that of oaths and execrations, or the cant phrases of thieves and vagabonds. No idea was familiar to him beyond the daily petty frauds of his ostensible employments. To pilfer and to drink, to drink and to pilfer, occupied all his thoughts in a never-ending round. His sister was very different. In the pursuit of her sinful practices she had always been thrown into the society of persons above her; from whom she had not learnt morality indeed, but she had caught a certain degree of civility and knowledge, which, with her original education in her mistress's family, had raised her in the scale of intellect and behaviour; so that she was never at a loss how to

apply to herself whatever I might have said which was pertinent to her case; or even to extract from me my opinions as to points about which she was desirous of information. Richard, on the other hand, was likely to be quite passive; and how then could it be ascertained, without extreme difficulty and abundance of time, what he did, and what he did not, understand?

On the following day I found him in the same situation as at my first visit, and apparently in the same dying state. He had not been in bed since I saw him. I asked him how he did. "As bad as I can be," was his answer. "Yes," I said, "you may think so; because you have never been so bad before; but God only knows; and he will also do what seems to himself to be fit. And as we can never know beforehand what it may be God's intention to do with us, whether to take us away immediately, or to leave us here a little longer, the wise man will always be prepared to meet him; and the sinner, when he comes to himself, will make all the haste in his power to obtain pardon; lest he should be overtaken, and cut off, before he has done it; the consequence of which must be that he will be cast into hell."

Whilst I said this, the sick man looked at me

wistfully; but made no remark. I therefore proceeded. "You say, you are as bad as can be. Are you then preparing, as a person in such a state might be expected to do, to appear before the great Judge, who is acquainted with all your actions; with every word that you have spoken; with every thought that has been in your mind? We men know very few of these things; but God knows them all; and there is nothing the most secret that you can hide from *him*. And moreover he will call you to a strict account for every thing that has been wrong, unless you repent of it before you die. Are you, I say then, truly and seriously engaged in this the most important of all business at all times, but more especially on the bed of death; looking back upon every circumstance of your past life; accusing and condemning yourself for every sin; resolving, if God should spare your life, never to do the like again; and praying him to give you a new mind, and in fact to make you a new creature? Is this what you are about?" I waited for an answer; and the answer was the same as yesterday, that he was doing the best he could, and that he could do no more.

Again I proceeded. "If you are indeed doing the best that you can, God gives you in his Bible the greatest and noblest encouragements. Hear what he says—'When the wicked man

turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.' He says again—'Repent; and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.' Again, 'saith the Lord God, why will ye die? I have no pleasure in the death of *him* that dieth; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart, and a new spirit.' But God sent his own Son, Jesus Christ, to preach this most comfortable doctrine, in such delightful stories, or parables, as they are called, that the broken-hearted sinner, applying them to his own case, cannot but be refreshed in spirit, and lifted up from the dust, and healed in his conscience, and taught to look up to heaven with faith and hope."

Then turning to the mother I enquired if she had read to her son the chapter of St. Luke which I had prescribed. She answered that she had. "And did you understand it, Richard, so as to profit by it?" I said, addressing myself again to the sick man. "No, Sir, no!" he replied; "not enough; I was in pain, and I am no scholar." "Now then," I continued, "that God is so gracious as to give you a little ease from your pain, I will endeavour to explain those parables

to you. Suppose that you were a man in health; and that you had earned ten half-crown-pieces by your labour; and that by some accident in the dusk of the evening you had dropped one in your chamber, and lost it; is a half-crown-piece of such value to you, that you would care at all for the loss of it?" "Aye, that I should," said Richard; "and sorely too, even for a shilling; a half-crown-piece is a great thing to such a poor man as me." "Then, I presume," said I, "you would spare no pains in trying to find it again." "No, *that* I would not," he replied, with more animation than I thought him capable of in his present condition. "You would perhaps light a candle," I said; "and search diligently under all the chairs, tables, and beds, and about the fender; and if there were any chink in the floor, you would pry closely into it. And if all this were not successful, you would no doubt also take the broom into your hands, and sweep out carefully every dusty hole and corner in the room, or on the staircase; and in short you would not rest a moment in peace and quiet, until you had recovered it." "Indeed I would not," he replied. "Well then," I continued; "suppose now that your search was at length rewarded, and that you had gotten the lost half-crown piece once more safe again with the rest in your pocket, should you be glad

in your mind, and make merry with your children about it?" "It is like enough I should," said he. "Very well;" I proceeded. "Now mark what Jesus Christ tells us about God, *his* Father, and the merciful Father of us all. Every sinner is to *him*, what the lost piece of money would be to *you*; something that he would wish very much to recover. Not that any sinner is of any consequence to *him* like the money is to *you*; but that God is so kind and gracious, that, for the sinner's own sake, he would not have a single soul lost; he would have every soul to be saved. Is not this an encouraging thing for sinners to hear? Does it not touch your heart? Will you not love such a God?"

The sick man muttered something, I knew not what; but by his looks I thought he would have answered if he could, "Aye, aye, he deserves my love; but hitherto I have known him only to set him at nought; and now I fear him." This was nothing but conjecture; so I went on. "You will ask me perhaps what trouble God takes to recover the sinner, as you would do to find your lost half-crown. Why, he tries different methods with different sinners, and with the same sinners at different times. He sends health and plenty to win them by his benefits, and thus to make them turn from their evil ways out of gratitude to the giver. Again he sends

sickness and poverty, and sweeps them with the besom of adversity, and compels them by his severities here to tremble at the thought of the more dreadful miseries which may afflict them hereafter; and thus perhaps at length he lights a candle in their minds, which enables them to see the precipice of destruction on which they were standing; to loathe themselves for their disobedience to his commands; and to understand how just and wise and excellent and good for men themselves all his commands must be. But beware of thinking that this severity is cruelty. No—it is all mercy and goodness. It is the seeking after that which was lost; the intention is thereby to save from perishing everlastingly the precious immortal soul. And now to apply this to yourself; thus it is that he would save your's; and I am the person whom he has sent to light the candle, and to sweep the house to find the sinner who was lost; that is, to bring him to himself, and to a just sense of his condidition, that he may repent, and turn from Satan to God. And should this be the consequence of his dealings with *you*, happy will you be; and he himself will rejoice over you, and all his holy angels with him, as you would rejoice upon finding some valuable thing which you had lost."

The sick man returned me no answer except by his looks, which indicated the opening of a

new world before his eyes. I was somewhat fatigued; so I concluded here with desiring him to turn these things over in his thoughts continually, 'till I saw him again; and then kneeling down on his stool, and repeating a single prayer with the benediction, I rose and departed.

At my next call he appeared to be precisely the same. His mother was in the room, and Phœbe was assisting to support him. I took no notice of her at present, waiting 'till I saw my way clearly before me. His mother told me, that he had been in bed but for a few minutes, where he was quite unable to breathe; and I observed that in this more upright posture on the chairs his respiration was very difficult. I asked him as usual how he did? His answer was that he could not hold it much longer. "God's will be done!" I said. "But if your time is so nearly out, you should make haste to do all that remains, and which is still in your power. Some things I have mentioned to you already, which are necessary to shew the sincerity of your repentance; there is another thing which I have not yet mentioned, and that is the Sacrament, which you ought to receive before you die. Would you wish me to give you the Sacrament?"

"As you please, Sir," he replied; "you know

best." "Do you understand," I enquired, "what is meant by taking the Sacrament?" "No," he said; "I cannot justly say that I do." I then enquired, if he knew so much about it as to be aware, that the chief part of the ceremony was to eat a small piece of bread, and to drink a little drop of wine. "Yes," he answered, "I know *that*; but *that* is all. What good is to come of it, I never could make out. I will take it, Sir, and thank you too, if it will keep me from going to the wicked place." "I hope it may," I said, "if you take it properly. Let us see. Mrs. Barton, have you read to your poor son, and explained to him, what I particularly wished you to do, in my little sermon, respecting our blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ?" "I have, Sir," she answered, "two or three times; and I have told him a great deal besides; and if I may be so bold as to speak, I hope, Sir, you will let him take the Sacrament."

"That I will," I said, "most gladly; but he does not understand the meaning of the thing sufficiently to reap any great benefit from it. However we must try to instruct him. Richard, you have been through many a turnpike-gate in your day; have you not? Only say yes, or no, when you find it painful to say more." "Yes," he answered. "And the toll-keepers gave you a ticket, did they not? which you stuck in your

hat, and so passed on perhaps through other gates, and on your return through the first gate, without any fresh payment? When they saw your ticket, they opened their gates, and let you through without any enquiry; did they not?" Thus I questioned him, and he answered as before. "Well then, now tell me," I said, "if you think that after receiving the sacrament the gates of heaven will be thrown open to you, as a matter of course, and without any enquiry into your character." "No," he replied; "I am not so foolish." "I am glad of it, Richard," I said; "but many people are foolish enough to think so. If *that* were true, it would be very easy to get to heaven indeed! However, you are not one of those foolish people; and you probably think therefore that the sacrament will do you no good at all, unless you take it in the proper manner, and with a proper understanding of it. Is this your opinion?"

"Yes," he replied. "You are right," I continued; "and now I desire you to consider that the bread and wine which we eat and drink in the sacrament are not common bread and wine, such as we eat and drink on common occasions, and at common meals, but tokens or representations of the body and blood of our Redeemer Jesus Christ. Do you know my meaning when I say tokens, or representations?" "No, in-

deed," he answered. "Well," I said, "you know what counters are?" "Yes, to be sure I do," was his reply. "You play with them, do you not?" I asked; "and they sometimes stand for sums of money? that is, they are the tokens or representations of so many shillings, or pence, or what not?" "Oh, yes, Sir," he answered, "I understand you now." "Very well; and these counters," I asked again, "when you played with them, always reminded you, did they not? of the more valuable thing, the money, for which they stood?" "Yes," he said. "In the same manner then," I proceeded, "when you see the bread and wine in the sacrament, they should remind you of the precious body and blood of Christ; and further, when you see the Minister breaking the bread, and pouring out the wine, this should remind you how that precious body was bruised and broken on the cross, and how that precious blood flowed out of the wounds which were made by the nails that were driven through his hands and feet, and by the spear which pierced his side; and, what is of most consequence, then you should think within yourself, and say, all this suffering he underwent for *me*, a sinner; the punishment that was due to my sins he took upon himself, and he died to save *me* from the anger of the great God, whom I have so often provoked. Shall I not love him

then, now that I am come to the knowledge of what he has done for me? Shall I not, as long as I live, do what I can to keep up in my mind the remembrance of his death, by which I may be saved from the most terrible punishment? Such should be your feelings, and thus should you reason with yourself; and I tell you besides, that Jesus Christ himself commanded us to keep up the remembrance of his death by eating the bread and drinking the wine. It was no invention of our's, but a positive command of *his*, which he gave at a most awful and affecting moment, the very night before his crucifixion; so that it was his dying command, and one therefore that we ought to be the more careful to obey. Long before this he had told those who were with him, that they could not enter into his kingdom, without eating his flesh, and drinking his blood. What he meant they could not *then* understand, but it was clearly explained to them afterwards, when he broke some bread into pieces, and gave it to them, and said, 'Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for *you*;' and when he poured out some wine, and bid them all drink of it, and said, 'This is my blood which is shed for you.' Upon the whole, then, Richard, if you comprehend what I have been telling you, you will perceive, that by taking the sacrament, you will obey one of your

great Saviour's commands; you will bring forcibly into your thoughts the memory of his death, which is of more consequence to you than all the riches in the world; and, as you will eat the bread and drink the wine, which represent his body and blood, he will in a manner be joined with you, and dwell in you; and *you* will be one with *him*, and *he* with *you*; and this must needs carry you to heaven with him.

"But then, to entitle yourself to this wonderful benefit, you must receive the sacrament worthily; that is, you must humble yourself before God; you must hate your sins, and yourself for committing them, and for offending so good and gracious a being as God is; you must make up all your quarrels with all your neighbours, and with every body; and you must resolve, should it please God to spare your life, (which he can do, even now, when you seem dying) you must resolve to follow new courses, and to be a good man. Not that you will ever have strength enough of your own to stand upright, and to keep you from falling again into sin; but God himself, if you make these resolutions honestly, and pray to him continually, will give you all the strength that is necessary, and will send you that other excellent Being, who is called the Holy Ghost, and who will make *you* holy as *he* is holy."

In this manner, but at more length, did I endeavour to explain to this poor ignorant man the sacred rite of the Lord's Supper, and, as far as I could judge, not entirely without success. All he said was as before, that he would do the best he could, and that he wished the sacrament to be administered to him. This then being settled, I turned to Mrs. Barton, and said, "*You*, I presume, will be one of the communicants." "If you please, Sir," she answered. "*You*," I continued, "have received the sacrament before upon a very painful occasion; this also is, if possible, a still more painful one; the hand of God cuts down your children in the flower of their age. Will *you*, your husband, and the rest of you, be ever sufficiently warned and instructed by these calamities, to prepare for an event which may happen to any of you, at any hour?" She sobbed aloud, and could not speak. "However," I said, "you are going to take the sacrament once more. Amongst other things which you may think it right to do to make yourself the more fit for it, do not forget to ask God to forgive you for neglecting to come to the proper place; to the sacred altar itself; and there to pick up the crumbs which fall from the Lord's table, and which are more than any of us are worthy to eat."

She was overwhelmed by this sudden unex-

pected rebuke, and covered her face with her apron, and remained speechless. Then directing my eyes to Phœbe, I said somewhat sternly to her, "Phœbe, if you had done as I bid you, I might perhaps have invited you to eat and drink with us. But what fellowship can there be between light and darkness? You have chosen the darkness of your own free will. You would not open your eyes, and see what was good for yourself, and pleasing to God. But he will never suffer us to mock him; what we sow, *that* we shall reap. God fixed the day, beyond which your marriage with Richard should be impossible. You let it pass without heeding it; it will never return. What remains for you, but shame and sorrow?" Then relaxing into a milder tone, I proceeded thus, "I do not say these severe things to you, Phœbe, in order to give you unnecessary pain; but to lead you to a true sense of your dreadful situation, and thereby to a thorough repentance, which alone, by God's mercy, and Christ's death for you, and the help of the Holy Spirit, can save you, both body and soul, from everlasting ruin."

The poor woman had sunk upon a chair, unable to support herself any longer. The chair shook under her. I went on therefore still more gently. "I wound you, Phœbe, to cure you. I lay your conscience bare, that you may see how

black it is, and that you may pray to God to make it as white as snow; which he can do, if it please him, and if he sees but the least spark of a wish in you to return to him; for then he will receive you with open arms, as the kind indulgent father received with joy his prodigal returning penitent son. And for this purpose, whenever you desire it, you may have my instructions, and any other assistance in my power. But, before I admit you to the sacrament, I must see more convincing proofs than I have yet done, of your intentions to cast off the works of darkness, and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Who then will be the other person to accompany the sick man in the performance of this great duty?" "Pray let *me*, Sir," said William Barton's wife, who had been present during the whole scene; "I have listened to every word, and I hope I shall be much the better for it." "I hope so too," I replied. "Let me find you therefore here when I return in the evening with every thing necessary for the sacrament."

Thus I departed for a few hours. At the appointed time I came back, and administered the holy rite with all the decency and order that were possible (but little enough) in such an apartment. The posture of the man; the way in which he was supported, and his livid ap-

pearance, brought forcibly to my recollection the wonderful picture of St. Jerome in the act of receiving extreme unction. Phœbe was upon her knees, expecting perhaps to be included amongst the communicants, but I passed by her, without offering her the consecrated elements; not thinking it right to expose her to the apparent hazard of incurring the guilt of our Lord's body and blood. The sick man himself received the bread and wine with the greatest humility, and with all the devotion of which he was capable.

When the ceremony was finished, after a short pause for private prayer, I addressed him thus: "My poor friend, you have now done what Jesus Christ, your blessed Saviour, commanded us all to do. So far, it is good for you at all events. It would have been better, without doubt, to have been all your life in the habit of doing it in God's own house. But they, who neglect any command, for any number of years, cannot act more wisely than by obeying it at the last, be it ever so late. They should never say, 'we have neglected it so long, that God will not accept it *now;* the time is past and gone;' they should never talk in that manner, but obey, whilst it is in their power to obey; and pray to God most earnestly, that of his gracious mercy he may forgive the former neglect, and accept the present

obedience. This is your case, Richard, and you see what still remains; prayer, earnest prayer. Under these circumstances, you may look back to the parables which your mother read to you, and one of which I explained; you may look back to them, and be cheered and comforted by them on the bed of death itself. You are the lost sheep; you are the lost piece of money; you are the prodigal son, who left his good father, and wasted all his substance in riotous living. But the lost sheep and the lost piece of money were both found again; and great was the joy to those who sought and found them; yea, so great was their joy, that, for the moment, it was even greater than all the joy which they felt for those that had never been lost at all. May it be *your* lot thus to be found of God, and thus to be rejoiced over! And, as to the prodigal son, the very moment that he came to a true sense of his condition, and confessed his wickedness, and set out to return to his father, his dear and most excellent father, knowing of it, had compassion upon him, and ran out to meet him, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him, and took him back into his house; and, to shew the greatness of his joy, he made a rich feast for his family, and they all began to sing, and dance, and be merry; so that with all these extraordinary signs of the Father's joy, it ap-

peared to be much more than he had ever felt for his other son, who had never offended him. May God, the kind Almighty Father of us all, for Christ's sake, receive *you* in this manner; and may it be said of *you*, as it was of the prodigal son, 'he was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.'" "Amen! Amen!" said the old mother; and immediately replacing the things in my basket, I took my leave, not knowing how to finish the business of the day with more solemnity, or with a greater effect.

The next day, wishing to see the poor man once more, and thinking that once more would be all; I visited him with some anxiety; but, to my great surprise, I found him for the first time in his bed, calm and composed, and breathing with perfect freedom; and, as any person might naturally have thought, having undergone a wonderful change for the better. Immediately upon entering I was told this by his mother; and seeing the man himself in so cheerful a state, comparatively with his former distress and dejection, I shook him by the hand, and congratulated him upon the apparent amendment of his health; enquiring whether he did not really feel that his sickness was very much abated. "Yes, Sir," he replied, "thank God for it! And I think I shall soon get well again."

This bodily improvement was a convincing proof to *me* that the man's mind had been improved; and that the load of guilt, under which he had been labouring, having been considerably lightened by his own repentance, by taking the sacrament, and by the instructions which he had now received in the Christian doctrines, a reaction had been made upon his body, and some of the evils which preyed upon it had been partly removed. It would be difficult to assign any other cause of the alteration which had taken place. The doctors had entirely abandoned him to *me*. I secretly therefore ascribed it to God's good providence thus rewarding my endeavours. Not being of opinion, however, that the sick man should be encouraged in supposing that all his danger was at an end, I said, "Your disorder, Richard, is a very uncertain one; I would not have you too sure that your life will be spared altogether; you must therefore make the best use that you can of these happy moments of ease, to prepare yourself so much the better to meet your Judge, when the time may come, whether sooner or later." These words damped his hopes, as I saw by his countenance; and indeed as I wished they might. I was afraid that he had already begun to relax his efforts to reconcile himself with God, so I proceeded in this manner.

"Now, Richard, I perceive how dear your soul is to God, and how desirous he is to save it! If it had not been so, he would have cut you down at once in his wrath. But he did not deal with you thus. He sent indeed a terrible sickness upon you, which threatened death at every instant; but he sent also at the same time his Holy Spirit, to dwell with you, and to put into your thoughts the fear of hell; and grief and sorrow for your sins; and purposes and resolutions of amendment of life, if your life should be prolonged; and to open your understanding, that you might understand the gracious doctrines of the Bible. After this, he enabled you to partake of Christ's body and blood; so that you might set up a fresh claim to that covenant of mercy and salvation through Christ, into which you entered at your baptism, but which you have since virtually renounced by the conduct of your life. And now he has removed all your pains, to try, perhaps, whether you will go on to improve during this blessed opportunity of ease, as you did during the violence of your disease; or whether your mind will turn back again to your sins. What a noble occasion has he given you to prove that your repentance is sincere, and that no expectations of a longer life shall have the bad effect of making you to swerve from *Him!* Let us see therefore what

can be done by prayer, to obtain the further help of the Holy Ghost, that he may bring to perfection the good work which he has begun in you."

Upon saying this, I knelt down by the bedside, and opening into the Psalms, I selected, according to my usual practice, whatever I thought suitable to his case and level to his comprehension, sentences expressive of gratitude and praise, and others of supplication for fresh assistance and support. The 145th Psalm alone furnished me with much of what I wanted at the present juncture; but I altered the arrangement of the verses, and here and there changed a word or two. The order which I adopted was this: 8th, 9th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 5th, 1st, 2nd. In the 141st, 142nd, and 143rd Psalms also there was much that was convenient for me, which I altered and arranged according to my own ideas of the poor man's wants, and which is sufficiently obvious without being particularised. Having thus employed myself about ten minutes, and having supplied him with abundance of matter and expressions for prayer and praise, I read the concluding portion of the Litany, beginning with the ejaculation, "Son of God, we beseech thee to hear us!" This having been finished, I shook him once more by the hand, and left him.

At the following visit a new event occurred, of which I endeavoured to make some use; but I fear in vain. It is remarkable, that, in attending upon the daughter and the son, I never once had met with their father or brothers, although I went at irregular times; nor did I now; but the sick man's bed was surrounded with others, who were reported to be his companions in drinking and gaming, and the rest of his iniquities. There were the two Bennetts and James Warren, and one or two more of that class, with whose names I was not then acquainted. In passing through the room below I was told by William Barton's wife, that there were several people above with her brother-in-law whom perhaps I might not like to see; but I pushed on the more eagerly, without waiting to be announced, lest they might occupy the stair-case before me, and so make their escape. "I must take care," I said, "that they do no mischief; and I must send them away with some good advice."

Under common circumstances, perhaps, these people would have insulted me personally, as they had trampled on my little dissuasive from swearing. With such men the Parson was always a fit subject for ridicule; and in passing a knot of them together in this neighbourhood I had sometimes overheard them making insolent re-

marks, which evidently pointed at myself. Besides, some of them were personally irritated against me, on account of the Association, and my constant endeavours to deprive them of their ancient resource, the poor's-rate. However, I had no doubt that I should be more than a match for them in a private room, and with one of their companions stretched on the bed of sickness before their eyes; so I entered fearlessly amongst them.

My arrival was quite unexpected. They were standing with their hats on. Instantly upon seeing me all hats were off; and they began to exhibit symptoms of alarm, as if they were caught in a snare; and, under pretence of making way for me to approach the bed, they were gradually shuffling aside to get out of the room. No doubt they had an inward respect for my spiritual office and character, even against their wills. Having lately too been the witnesses, in several cases, of my readiness to visit their sick friends, however wicked, and however wretched their abodes, and to relieve all their bodily wants, as well as to pray for the salvation of their souls, they might have been led to conceive a different opinion of my other proceedings from that which they had been used to entertain. But, be this as it may, observing their trepidation, and conscious of my authority

over them, I cut off their retreat by wheeling to the left towards the fire, instead of advancing straight towards the bed. By this manœuvre, upon arriving at a certain point, from which the sick man was visible, I had them all between myself and the window; and it was impossible for them to escape without rudely pushing before me, which they seemed by no means inclined to attempt. From this position then I began to speak; first addressing my patient, and gradually turning my discourse to his friends.

"Well, Richard, my good man," I said, "how are you to-day? But I hardly need ask such a question; for I see by your looks, and by your posture in the bed, that you are better even than yesterday." "Yes, Sir," he replied, "I *am* indeed." "I am glad of it," I continued; "and here are your friends, I suppose, come to rejoice with you about it. It does them credit. If they thought as I did about you, they must have thought that you would have been a dead man long before this." "We did, Sir," said one of them; "we all thought so." "It is a wonderful thing," I proceeded, "certainly; this recovery of your's, Richard; it is like receiving you back from the grave. Do you not think so yourself?" "Yes, Sir," he answered; "one foot was in it, to be sure."

"Well, then," I asked, "what is the cause of

this sudden and surprising change? Your medicines, I presume, have done wonders." "My medicines, Sir?" he replied. "I have taken none. The doctor would not give me any." "Then we must look for some other cause," I said. "What can it be? It was perhaps the strength of your constitution, which has carried you through this terrible attack." "How can that be," he enquired eagerly, "with such a leg as I have had for so long a time? No, no; that can never be the case." "Well then," I said, "we must consider again. There must be some cause; nothing can happen without a cause; and, as it seems, we can find no human cause, no cause here on earth, where must we look?" "Why to Heaven, I should think," was his answer. "You are in the right, certainly," I said; "and very glad I am to perceive that you are now wise enough to look up to Heaven, and to be aware that your blessings come down from thence. But I must tell you, that if you had been taking medicines, and if the medicines had appeared to agree with you; or if you had enjoyed the stoutest constitution of body possible, so as to enable you to bear the utmost pain and want of food for ever so long a time, 'till the violence of your disorder abated, still your amendment would have been owing to God above. You would not have seen it so clearly,

or perhaps not at all; you might have said, it is the medicine; it is my constitution; and your friends might have talked in that manner; but it does not signify, God sends us every good thing that we have, by one way, or by another way, or by no way that we can find out; and it is too often the case with men in general, who think little or nothing about God, that if a blessing come to them in some way which they can account for, they do not see the hand of God in it at all; whereas his hand is in it just the same. By his blessing their labour and industry procure them plenty of food and clothing; whilst men think it is all their own work. By his blessing their houses are not burnt down, and all their property destroyed; whilst they think it is their own care that preserves them. Well; what is to be done then? Why, sometimes God lets people alone to follow their own fancies; sometimes he sends them his blessings in so unusual a way, that they cannot help saying, this is God's doing; and happy would it be for them, if from the first moment of finding him out, they would turn to him and worship him, and serve him with all their minds and all their hearts. This is what God expects and deserves from *you*, Richard; he has been so gracious as neither to kill you at once, nor to suffer you to recover in any way that you can account for; so that you have been

forced in a manner to see his hand in the business; and now it is your turn to shew your thankfulness by loving him, and fearing him, and keeping all his commandments for the rest of your life. Should not this be so?"

"To be sure it should," he replied. "Well," I said, "but I think I can tell you something more about it. One thing indeed I am quite certain of, namely, that God was pleased with your behaviour when your pains and sufferings were so great. And you know the reason why. You were sorry that you had ever offended him, by breaking any of his laws; you prayed to him both aloud and silently in your own breast, that he would forgive you; you resolved and promised in your own mind, and between *him* and *you*, that if you lived you would live very differently in future; you came to the knowledge of his blessed Son, Jesus Christ, your only Saviour and Redeemer; and to shew that you trusted in him to be a partaker of that salvation which he procured, from the punishments of the next world, you received his sacred body and blood. These were the things which you did; and these are things which always please God; and therefore it is no wonder that he has extended his goodness towards you, and has delivered you from your bodily pain; and, what is of much more consequence to you, he has enabled you,

if you use his help, and act up to your intentions, to obtain a greater reward hereafter. Every man, you know, will be judged and treated according to his works. But what good works have *you* been yet able to perform? None whatever, since your repentance and receiving the sacrament. If you live, you may do many, every day of your life; and it is only the power of doing these good works that makes life valuable at all. If you ask me, what good works a person of your humble rank may be able to do; I answer, in a few words, which will shew you, however, that there is good within your power of great extent, and of great importance. How excellent is truth, and how abominable all falsehood and lying! How commendable to speak always with calmness and propriety; and to avoid all angry, quarrelsome, abusive language; all cursing and swearing; all taking of God's name in vain; never indeed to utter the name of God, without feeling an awe of his power and goodness. How becoming a man is sobriety; how beastly is drunkenness! How just to the community, and how self-satisfactory, to get your own living by the labour of your hands and the sweat of your brow; doing no injury to any of your neighbours, by taking what is not your own; no, not even stealing a stick out of their hedges, or a

turnip out of their fields! How delightful, how Christian, to be seen always on the Sabbath-day at Church with your family; and to pass the evening in reading, or in hearing your children read, the holy Bible! I could mention many things more, but these will prove to you, what an abundance of good works will be within your reach, if God should restore your health, and how many you are capable of even now. But if you had died without doing any of these things, and if God had received you into heaven for the sake of your mere sorrow and contrition, through Christ Jesus, you must have sat down in the very lowest station. Is not God then astonishingly gracious to you in giving you this chance of obtaining a higher station of glory and happiness? Not that the good works which you may do have any real merit in themselves to carry you there, but it has pleased God to require them of you, and to proportion your reward to them, because they are suitable to your own nature, and useful to your fellow-creatures, and such as will make you resemble in a faint degree God himself. To live in this manner, Richard, is to live indeed; and now that you have had one foot in the grave, you can see it plainly. When we are going to die, or think so, then our eyes are opened, and we can discern the truth. Before, we are blind. But

what say your friends here to all these matters? Have they found out the right way, in the midst of health, and strength, and prosperity? Better it would be for them to do so; but if not, it would be happy for them to be afflicted by God, as you have been, that they might be brought to the same mind which you have. Have you told them this, Richard?"

"No, Sir," he replied, "I cannot say that I have." "Well then," I said, "I have told them for you; but they would perhaps have believed *you* better than *me*. Yet they have no reason, that I know of, to disbelieve *me*. Am not I the Parson, (turning more directly towards them, I put the question,) am not I the Parson, appointed by God's good providence to watch over you, for the salvation of your souls?" They were very uneasy, and restless, and loth to answer; so I questioned them again. "And to whom is the salvation of your souls of any consequence, if not to yourselves? I have no interest in it whatever, except to do my duty, and to please God. I ask you for no fee; I wish to get nothing from you at all. On the very contrary, I am ready to spend my own substance upon *you*, in your necessities. Am I not then to be believed?"

They were quite dumb, and more and more disturbed; conscience-struck, and wishing them-

selves, as it seemed, a thousand miles off. I continued, "And what is it that I tell you? I tell you that there are two worlds; this and the next. And what is this? Why short, very short, even to those who live the longest in it. And what is the next? It is eternal; it will have no end; it will last for ever. Millions and millions, and tens of millions of years, will pass, and you will be no nearer to the end of it than at the first. This life, therefore, compared with the life to come, is but a speck in the sky; a drop of water in the ocean; an atom of dust in the whole earth. What folly, then, even if this were the whole of the case, what amazing folly to think so much of this world, and so little of the next!

"But this is only a small part of the case. We know pretty well the good and the evil of this short world; but the good and the evil of the eternal world, into which we must all soon enter, is beyond and above human knowledge, experience, and imagination. The happiness of it no eye of man hath seen, no ear hath heard, no heart hath conceived. At God's right hand there are rivers and seas of pleasures for evermore. The misery of it also is black with insufferable, indescribable horrors. Who can dwell with everlasting burnings? Who can explain the terrible lake of fire and brimstone, which is

never put out; the gnawing worm which never dies; the weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth amongst the damned, without stop, without end?

"Now then, that you see more of the case, now calculate the folly, the gross stupidity, the brutal senselessness, nay, the utter insanity and madness, of those who barter away their precious immortal souls, capable of such happiness, liable to such misery; who barter them away for the petty, wretched, low, grovelling pleasures of this world. Pleasures indeed will they call them? Pleasures of the ale-house, of the skittle-yard, of the brothel? I ask you, Bennetts, and you, Warren, and the rest of you, whose faces I know, but not your names, I ask you all, are these the things, smoking, and drinking, and gambling, and singing lewd songs, and following loose women, are these the things which make your happiness? Are these the things, for which you are content to give up heaven, and to be cast into hell? For of these things hell is the sure consequence. Answer me, you who can; you who understand me. Have you made up your minds to this?"

Their countenances bespoke alternations of anger and dismay, guilt and shame. I vexed them deeply; but it was evident that they respected and feared me. At length one of the

Bennetts spoke, and said, "We are slandered, Sir, if you have been told that we are men of such a character; we work, when we can get work, as hard as any set of men in the parish; we seldom come upon the poor's-rate, except in a hard winter, or when we are sick; and if we could get some decent clothes, we might come to Church. But these which you see are all that we have for week-days and Sundays too. We could not come to Church in these."

Having at last induced them to talk, I relinquished the high tone of preaching, and relaxed into the lower and milder of conversation. "Yes," I said, "*that* may be very true; but, my good fellows, how came you to have no better clothes? You are all young and unmarried; you might get the same wages throughout the year as others do, who have wives and families to maintain out of them; some of you, I know, get very large wages in the summer by brickmaking, or other jobs; why not lay by a part for the winter, or for sickness, or to furnish your houses when you marry, and to keep yourselves at all times in respectable clothing? Have you ever heard of my saving-bank?"

"Yes," replied Warren; "but I never could spare any thing to put in there." "No," I said; "because you spend all that you can scrape together in liquor. How many scores have you

got now against you in the different public houses?" He was abashed, and the rest looked significantly at him. "I shall not trouble myself," I continued, "to go and enquire; nor do I wish to know; but remember, that if you can conceal these things from *me*, you cannot conceal them from God. He is sure to know, whatever you may say to deceive others, how you spend both your time and your money. And then there is your poor old mother, whom you have suffered to become a pauper, and dependent on the parish for her support. All the time that you were a child, and till you grew up to be able to work for yourself, did she ever apply to the parish for you?" "Never," he answered, "that I ever heard of." "Never," I said; "certainly never; she told me so. And now, I ask you, is it not a much easier thing for *you* to maintain *her*, than it was for *her* to maintain *you?* Is this honouring your mother? Is this common gratitude? Is this returning good for good? How many cares and troubles did she constantly undergo for you? How did she labour with her hands, without ceasing, that she might bring up a son to be the staff of her age, without being talked of as a parish-pensioner? But you have disappointed all her hopes in this respect, and, I fear, in too many other respects besides, which I cannot now stay to mention.

However, you have heard what I have said to poor Richard here, and I say the same to *you*. If you are sorry, as you seem to be, now that I have pointed out your errors to you, and if you turn over a new leaf, God will forgive it all. And I advise you most earnestly, as your best friend, to do so; for if not, your soul is lost for ever."

My solemn tone had again returned; he cast his eyes to the ground, and appeared to be looking for excuses in vain; at length he said, "I am no scholar, Sir; I was never taught any of these things." "But you can read; can you not?" I asked. "Yes," he replied, "I can read a little." "Well then," I rejoined, "there is your Bible to read; I know that your mother has got one; and there is our Parochial Library, as we call it, from whence you may get plenty of nice plain instructive little books; but, above all, there is your Church to go to, where you might learn every thing necessary for you, not only in this world, but also to prepare you for the next."

Thinking by this time that I had spoken quite enough to them, and being also anxious myself to go somewhere else; and besides, not wishing to leave them in the room after I was gone, I now said, "I have a word to mention to Richard in private, before I take my leave, and there-

fore I will thank you all to go." They began to move immediately upon receiving this happy unexpected release; nor did they stay a moment to bid their sick companion a single farewel; they were quite crest fallen, and seemed scarcely to know whether they stood upon their heads or their heels. I gave way for them to pass, and just said, as they went by, "I hope in future we shall be better friends; I am sure we shall, if you become better men; and then you will always find me most ready and willing to do what I can for you." The last of them made me a slight inclination of their heads at this speech, and they all soon disappeared down the tottering stair-case.

When the clattering of their nail-shod feet was over, I went close to the bed-side, and said, "Richard, you must be careful about these men. I strongly suspect that they came here, upon learning that you was so much better, in order to tell you, that they expected soon to see you amongst them again. Was this so?" "It was, Sir," he answered. "Ah! Richard, Richard," I went on, "you will be in great danger, if you recover enough to go abroad. Will these people attend to what I have been pressing upon them?" "Only, I fear, for a little while," was his reply. "And I fear so too," I said; "so that you must beware of them to the very utmost of your

power, if you wish to remain in the favour of God, and in the faith of Christ, and in the hope of being saved. And I must remind you of one thing which is very terrible; that they who fall back into their former courses after having been once rescued from them, become ten times more the children of the devil than before. God grant that this may not be your case! And now I will kneel down and pray with you;" which having done, I rose and hastened away.

From this time I visited him regularly twice a week for nearly two months; in which period he never made any great improvement in his health, nor was he ever much worse. The fluctuations on one side and on the other side were very slight; but his entire recovery became less certain every day.

Long as the interval was, no opportunity presented itself of making any extraordinary attempts to do good. His mother and William Barton's wife were the only persons whom I ever saw with him. Phœbe, not being absolutely wanted at home, went out to work daily, and gained something considerable for the necessities of the family. He himself, as I was willing to think, being more and more instructed in the Bible, and not relaxing in his penitence, was more and more fit to die. His companions

had shaken him a little; but they troubled him no further. One such visit was enough; and they feared to encounter the parson again. Richard was thus more fit to die; but his great desire was to live; and he persuaded himself that he should; although I never ceased to warn him, how very unlikely it was to be so.

I do not record the conversations that passed between us, or rather what I said to him on these occasions, (for he was generally silent himself) because similar things are recorded in the cases of others with more interest. My chief object was to wean him step by step from this world; and the chief obstacle was, his fears of the next; so that, what with wishing to live, and thinking that he should live, I made but little progress. To the happiness and glory of heaven he could not elevate his views at all. At the end of the time however, as I said before, he was much improved in knowledge, and he was a much better man; his penitence continuing, and all difficult temptation having ceased.

Under these circumstances I was sent for in haste one morning between the two days of my regular weekly visits; and I found him on the chairs precisely in the same condition as when I first saw him. I was deeply shocked, and for a time unable to speak. He looked at me with an expression of countenance which I too well un-

derstood; his lips quivered; the tears gushed from his eyes. His mother and Phœbe were weeping on each side of him; William's wife was not unmoved. His father was not present, nor any of his brothers. At length collecting myself I said, "Ah! my poor friend, I am sorry to see you thus! I fear you are in great bodily distress; but your mind, I trust, is firm in the faith of Christ, and stayed on the mercy of God, who has promised not to cast out any who come to him."

He had strength perhaps, but he had not spirit to answer me a word; his hopes of life were all dashed to the ground; he was quite broken down; and he seemed to see death, the king of terrors, advancing upon him with hasty strides. His mother and Phœbe alternately wiped his face which was bedewed with mingled sweat and tears. I too should have thought that he was at the point to die, if I had not seen him in an apparently similar situation before. With the view of trying to compose him I offered to pray; and so kneeling on his footstool, I said, "Lord, have mercy upon us! Christ, have mercy upon us! Lord, have mercy upon us!" And then I repeated that most beautiful and touching prayer, which begins, "O Father of mercies and God of all comfort, our only help in time of need; we fly unto thee for

succour," &c. &c. The part which speaks of the possibility of a restoration to health by the power of God which is able to do all things, I suppressed; and I resumed the thread of the prayer with the words, "so fit and prepare him, we beseech thee, against the hour of death," &c. &c. This is an alteration which I frequently make for various reasons in the cases of various persons; sometimes not wishing, and sometimes being unable, to tell them that "the time of their dissolution draweth near," or to inspire them with the hope of "a longer continuance amongst us."

This being finished, I passed as usual to the Psalms, and made an appropriate selection of sentences for his benefit, and to guide him to the several feelings which became his present situation. The sixth Psalm first caught my eye; almost the whole of which was applicable; and I dwelt upon it as a basis for a considerable time; altering and enlarging, as I found convenient. The third verse I changed in this manner—"My soul also is sore troubled; but thou, O Lord, support, uphold, and comfort me!" The fifth again I modelled thus—"O, remember me, even in the midst of death! O, forget me not, when I go down into the grave!" This was totally different from what the Psalmist himself intended to say; but the words suggested it to me, and

the thought was what I seemed to want for my poor patient in his extremity. The sixth verse I put in this manner—"Help me, O God; lest I be weary of my groaning, and abide not patiently; lo, every night," &c. &c. The seventh thus; "My beauty is gone for very trouble; and worn away, because of the long affliction which thou hast laid upon me." Then the eighth and ninth; "away from me, all ye that work deceit and lying, and follow after vain pleasures; away from me, all ye wicked and foolish people; for I will put my trust in the Lord; and he will listen to the voice of my weeping; he will hear my petitions; he will receive my prayer; he will cheer me, when death hangs over me." Then I fell upon the sixteenth and seventeenth Psalms, which I adapted to my purpose on similar principles; but I will not now detail the precise alterations which occurred to me at the moment. The success of the whole appeared to correspond to my wishes; Richard became wonderfully tranquil; but he said nothing; yet his desire that I should proceed was evident in his looks. After a short pause therefore I pronounced the Lord's Prayer; and then the Collect in the office for the Communion of the Sick, with the omission of one sentence; and lastly the Benediction at the end of the Visitation.

Upon this, rising on my feet and standing be-

fore him, I expressed my hopes, that he was now very comfortable in his mind at least. No answer being given, his mother informed me, that the present seizure had deprived him of the power of speech, for an hour or two, which had afterwards returned, and was now perhaps lost again. His understanding however was quite alive; so I said, "How good and gracious God is to you, Richard, even to the end! What a great mercy it is, that you have all the faculties of your mind about you even now! Many people are delirious; many are childish; many are insensible altogether of their own condition, and of what passes around them; so that they can make no use whatever of the most awful and important moments of their existence. But it is not so with *you*. God does not permit you indeed to praise him, or to pray to him, with your tongue and voice; but his candle of the mind still burns within your breast, and by the light of it you are still able to praise him and to pray to him in silence. And he will hear you just as well. Thoughts fly up to *him*, as well as words. And you have much to think of; much to praise him for; much to pray for.

"Think how sin had brought you to the brink of the pit of destruction; and your eyes were shut, and saw not the urgent danger, though gaping under your feet. But God sent calamities

and sicknesses upon you; and roused you out of your deep and perilous slumber; and cut you off from your sinful course of life; and separated you from every temptation, and from the possibility of returning to it. He meant to save, and not to destroy you; and therefore your sickness has been long and painful; it has been such as to wean you from the world, and to shew you the emptiness and the folly of it's pleasures; it has given you the means of learning who your God is, who your Saviour, who your Sanctifier; what is heaven, and what hell. You were a heathen in a Christian land; your sickness has made a Christian of you; and, if you do not die, like the penitent thief on the cross, close by your Redeemer's side, yet you will die after having partaken of his body and blood.

"Think of these things; they are worthy of all your thoughts; and then your thoughts will mount up in prayer and praise to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. You will praise them for all that they have done for you; for snatching you like a brand out of the fire, ready to be consumed; for bringing you into the narrow road which leads to heaven. You will pray to them, whilst a breath of life remains, to finish their good work, and to make you fit for their society. Without holiness you cannot see them; without the Holy Ghost you cannot be holy;

to *him* therefore you must pray, to the very last, to purify your heart from all the love of sin, which may yet lurk about you; to fill you with a thorough hatred and detestation of it; and that you may thus at length close your eyes on this world in peace with your God, with your Saviour, and with yourself; and open them in the next world to everlasting happiness, and everlasting honour."

Here I stopped, intending to say no more; but looking round and seeing the old mother and Phœbe weeping; and recollecting, that something perhaps might still be done for Phœbe's benefit; I resumed my speech, and said; "the salvation of your own soul, my good Richard, at such a moment as this, must have the first place in your prayers; but pray for these too; for your mother, who has never deserted you in your distress; for Phœbe who has laboured with her hands to support *you* and the children. They are weeping for the loss of you; but what is *their* loss will be *your* gain, if God should take you to himself; and God has done so much for you, that I think he will do every thing else, if you endure faithfully to the end. Whilst you pray for this, pray too that *they* also may get to heaven hereafter. Here is poor Phœbe; she is, I believe, sorry for what is past; she has done something to make amends for her

former misdoings; she will have many difficulties, and many temptations to struggle with. God only knows how she will get through them! But I am sure she will not be able to get through them without frequent prayer. Do you therefore pray for her; and let her pray for herself; and then perhaps you may meet her again in heaven, cleansed from all sin, and in pure robes of white!"

Thus I ended. The effect seemed to be great upon all. Phœbe was in agonies; the face of the dying man was convulsed; and I hurried from a scene, which began to be too interesting to bear.

Calling on the morrow I was informed in the chamber below that Richard Barton was dead. "He died, Sir," said William Barton's wife, "about the middle of the night. No great change took place in him, after you left us, 'till an hour or two before he breathed his last. He recovered his speech, but he said nothing particular. His mother was gone home too ill to be sent for again; his brothers were all with him, and Phœbe and myself. He was seized with a fit; and afterwards seemed to be quite senseless, and knew nobody; dozing without pain 'till God took him. I hope he is gone to heaven, Sir." "I hope so too, good woman," I answered;

"he was penitent, I think." "Yes, Sir," she replied; I am sure he was from the very first."

"Will his death," I asked, "thus cut down as he is in the vigour of his years, produce any good effect upon you all?" She hesitated; so I enquired again; "Where is Phœbe?" "She is up-stairs, Sir," said she, "alone with the body. Will you walk up, and see it?" "No," I answered; "I can do no more now than bury him. A corpse is an awful sight. It shews the mighty irresistible power of God, and the weakness, the nothingness of men. I may be a corpse; you may be a corpse, in an instant, if God so will. Should we not then be always ready to meet him?" Do you suppose beforehand that your last sickness will be as long as Richard's."

"No, Sir," she answered; "I leave it all to God." "Was not your neighbour, Mr. Sambrook," I asked, "killed in a moment, by a fall from his cart?" "Yes, Sir," she replied. "And was he prepared for death, do you think?" I asked again. "No, Sir," she said quickly; "*that* he was not." "Then *you*, I hope, as you seem so calm about yourself, (thus I continued) are well prepared?" "Thank God!" she answered; "I am not so bad as he was." "Perhaps not," I said; "but it is very unwise to compare yourself with others, unless they are very good and

excellent persons whom you may make your pattern. Do you imagine that God will save *you*, because there are others in the world much worse than yourself?" "No," she replied, "I do not think he will." "Then," I proceeded, "it is of no use to you to be better than those who are bad. You must be careful to perform all the duties which belong to your own station, whatever may be done by others; and it is by those duties, that your great Judge will try you. Suppose therefore he should question you, whether you have been regular in your attendance at his holy Church; would you excuse yourself by saying that Mr. Sambrook never went there, and that he had been guilty of many wicked things from which you were perfectly clear? If you did, would not the Judge stop you, and say, I do not ask you what Mr. Sambrook did, or what Mr. Sambrook was, or whether you are better than *him*; but I ask you this simple question, whether you have been regular at my Church. Answer to *that*, and that alone. What would you do?"

She was convicted in her conscience; but endeavoured to evade the conclusion, by assuring me, that she wished to come to Church, and was only kept away by many great difficulties and inconveniences. "In general," I said, "where there is a will, there will also be a way; but

whatever your reasons are, you must take care to be sure that they are such as God himself will approve. He knows already what they are; and as far as I can guess about them, I should think he would not approve of them. But again; suppose he should ask secondly, whether you sent your children to school regularly, or not; must you not be compelled to plead guilty of not sending them? And then he might say, *you*, their mother, have been the cause of the ruin and damnation of your own children. Can any of Mr. Sambrook's sins be greater than this? And I have sent afflictions into your family to make you consider and examine your conduct and amend whatever is wrong; therefore you are the more inexcusable. Thus might God reason with you. He does so by *me* his minister. Think of it. Good morning to you." So I left her in confusion.

SECTION III.

JOHN AND ANN BARTON.

AFTER this second death in the family of the Bartons, I had no intercourse with any of them for several months, except when we met accidentally on the roads; and on those occasions there

was no opportunity for serious conversation. When I called at their houses, it so happened that I never surprised them at home. The appearance however of the old mother, betokening a gradual decay, led me to suppose that she would soon be confined within doors altogether, and that I in consequence should be sent for to visit her. Meanwhile, both herself, and her daughter-in-law, William's wife, were now and then at church. Not so the father, or the sons; and Phœbe had been removed by the parish-officers to the place of her own settlement, being unmarried, and pregnant, and in danger of burdening us with another child.

At length the expected message arrived. For some reason or other, which I now forget, it was not in my power to obey it; but I gave the proper directions and explanations to my curate, who went to her accordingly without delay. It seemed by his report that she was much disappointed at seeing *him* instead of *me*, and that she would scarcely permit him to perform his duties; whether it were, that having become familiar with my manner of talking to the sick, and attached to me through gratitude, she wished for my attendance in her last moments, which she supposed to be now near at hand; or perhaps from a less worthy motive; that of obtaining pecuniary aid. To many of the sick, I be-

lieve, this was the sole motive of their sending for me. I was rich, and had besides the entire disposal of the Sacrament-money, and other funds for charitable purposes; and it was my injunction to my curates, not to give any thing out of their own pockets, but, like the Deacons of old, to report to the Rector all the cases of distress, which seemed to demand his interference. I was therefore the only immediate giver to be certainly depended upon; and in consequence I was the person always sent for by the poor. However, in old Mrs. Barton's case, the other motive had probably no little influence; and I was disposed to consider the matter in that light, and to give her credit for right feeling. I went therefore to her on the following day; and I must do her the justice to say, that, although my pecuniary assistance was but small, she never once, during a very long illness, applied to the parish for further relief.

On my way I called upon the apothecary, who told me that her disorder was a general breaking up of the constitution, and that he could do nothing for her by medicine but procure her perhaps a little sleep and freedom from pain. The pain at first was chiefly in her bowels, and was no doubt very severe; for I found her doubled down in her bed, and uttering most piteous groans. She observed me however as I entered;

but after a single glance, without any attempt to speak, with quivering lips, she gave herself up again to her own sorrows.

Her Prayer-book was lying on the bed by her side; I took it into my hands, and knelt down. I was accompanied by four of my children, two girls and two boys. It was the first time that any of them had been with me on such an errand, and it had not occurred to me to give them directions with regard to their behaviour. In a moment, without hesitation, without looking for clean places, when they saw me kneel, they knelt also themselves on the dirty floor around the sick bed; and the boys, being the youngest, put up their little hands, closed together, in the attitude of prayer. Tears came into my eyes, and my utterance was stopped. The sight was beautiful and touching in the extreme; a most interesting and striking subject for the study of a painter. The least of the boys indeed, with his light auburn hair, hanging in natural curls about his face, was an exact living copy of one of those little cherubs, whom the great painters have so commonly placed around the death-beds of their saints.

The sick woman saw them; for an instant she forgot her pain; raising her head and clasping her hands, she exclaimed. "Oh, Sir, what a sight! What pretty, what heavenly creatures

are these!" She was rapt into the blissful realms above; or thought, I believe, that these were God's messengers sent to conduct her thither. "Remember," I said, "remember, my good Mrs. Barton, how our great Master told us, that we must all become like little children, if we would enter into the kingdom of heayen. Their innocence and simplicity, their modesty, humility, and teachableness of disposition; their ready and cheerful obedience to their parents and instructors; are qualities and virtues indeed, which cannot but be highly acceptable in God's sight; and none, who possess them, and apply them to the knowledge and practice of the Gospel, *can* be far from his kingdom. But, alas! to become like little children, we that are come to this age must undo much that has been done; we must be made, as it were, afresh; we must be renewed in the spirit of our minds; we must become by daily sincere repentance new creatures; and then perhaps *our* angels, like the angels of these little ones, (whatever *that* may mean; but something supremely good it *must* mean,) will behold the face of our heavenly Father."

"Ah! Sir," she replied with difficulty, "I wish indeed that I were one of *them* in innocence, or in God's favour; and *then* that the Lord himself would take me! But, pray for me, Sir; pray for me! I can follow you, I hope, in the

midst of all this agony; but I cannot speak." "I will pray for you," I said, "that you may be made perfect by your sufferings. It was so with Christ himself. Such is God's intention with respect to *you*. He loves you, and would purge you in this manner, as you know very well, from all the sin that still clings to you; and thus he would raise your thoughts from the cares and troubles of this earth to the peace and joy of heaven."

She acquiesced in silence, and stifled her moanings to hear me the better. I read the parts of the exhortation which accorded with what I had said, and which suited her present condition. I then occupied myself with the Psalms for about ten minutes; and, lastly, I repeated the prayer which follows the absolution. This being done, I gave her the blessing, and rose, and departed with my children. She was quite incapable of joining in conversation; but I had no doubt that her sickness would be a lingering one, and that favourable moments might present themselves for saying all that her situation required.

So it happened by God's blessing. At my next visit she was sitting up in her bed, and was entirely free from pain. And such was her condition, fluctuating between these two ex-

tremes, for the space of three months. One day she was in violent agonies, and sometimes even wrapped up in the blanket and without spirit to behold my face; another day she was quite at ease, and cheerful; but meanwhile she became weaker and weaker, and she never quitted her bed. On the present occasion she entered into free conversation about her family, being naturally communicative, when able to talk, and now particularly urged to be so by the recent committal of one of her youngest sons to prison on a charge of robbery.

"Ah! Sir," she said, "it is not old age that kills me; it is disease brought on by grief; the evil courses and the deaths of my children are bringing me fast to my grave. I know too well, Sir, that we are called the worst family in the parish; and truly I cannot deny that there is reason for calling us so. I hoped indeed, since the death of poor Richard, (God rest his soul!) that we were going on better; but now Thomas is accused of robbing his master. And I fear, Sir, it is too true. However he is shut up in prison, and must abide his trial; and meanwhile the whole parish cries out against the Bartons. This cuts me to the heart. Ah! Sir, my poor sons would never be content with the common wages and regular labour, like their old father. Jobbing brings in more money for the time; but

then, when the job is over and money plentiful, they are tempted to be idle and go to the alehouse, and so they spend their money sooner than they got it; and perhaps there is no other job ready to their hand, when their money is gone; and thus they are poorer in the end than the poorest day-labourer, with ever so small regular wages. And what comes next? Why, they run up a score at the alehouse, and wherever else they can get tick. Then, seeing no chance of paying their debts by honest means, they fall to gambling, and at last to pilfering and stealing; so they come into trouble indeed. And if they have children to support, the misery is ten times greater. Ah! Sir, I have said all this over and over again to my sons, 'till I have tired both myself and *them* with saying it; and when poor Richard was lying on his death-bed, 'now,' said I, 'you can understand; now tell me, whether it was not all true that I said to you so often, and to which you would never hearken; no, nor to your sister Mary, when she was dying, and told you the same?' 'Yes,' said the poor fellow, shaking his head, 'Yes, mother, it is all true; but it is over with me now; speak to the rest of them; for I cannot.'"

Here she stopped to wipe away the tears which were dropping on her cheeks; and I took advantage of the pause to remind William Bar-

ton's wife, whom I generally found in attendance upon her old mother-in-law, that *she* too had a large family; and that she now heard what would be their destruction, and her own ultimate sorrow, (from an aged experienced person, who knew it too well), if she did not bring them up in different courses. "Yes, Sir," she replied; "I know it too well myself; but God is my witness, I cannot help it; and what will become of us all, he only can tell." "It is very lamentable," I said, "indeed; for in the natural order of things, evil must follow such a system of bringing up your children, or rather such a total neglect of all system. You cannot expect that God should work miracles to save *your* family from ruin. Cannot you send them to school?"

"They will not go, Sir," she answered; "and if I correct them for refusing, I gain the ill will of my husband; and so they run about all day in the lanes and fields; and pick up the worst playmates; and learn to swear, and plenty of bad tricks besides. Ignorant and idle they are, and will be, and *must* be, Sir, unless by God's will things are greatly changed." "You come," I said, "yourself, now and then to church. Could you not bring your elder children with you?" "No, Sir," she replied; "they are bare-legged, and bare-footed, and ragged all over; they would

disgrace the church by being seen there. It is hard work to get any thing decent for myself to appear in. My husband brings me home but little money. I go out to wash three times a week regularly, and at other times on particular occasions. This is our main dependance. But whilst I am absent, the children are left to themselves; the biggest nurse the least, and all get into mischief together. It was but the other day, that my biggest girl laid down the infant in the road, whilst she scrambled into the hedges to look for a bird's nest; and if it had not been for a neighbour, who came by just in the nick of time, the poor child crawling about in the mud would have been stifled to death. What to do I know not."

"Pray, my good woman," I said, "as your children go to no school, do you try to teach them any thing at home? Have you any cards with letters upon them; or spelling-books; or little histories from the Bible, to instruct or amuse them? Do you, or your husband, ever read the Bible to them in the evening?" "God bless you! Sir," she answered immediately; "my husband cannot read at all; nor I well enough for children to understand me." "So then," I said, "they are growing up without any instruction whatever, as far as appears at present. Have you taught them to know that there is a God,

and to pray to him?" "Ah! Sir," she replied, "I have tried to do it; but it is of no use. I go out to my work in the middle of the night; so that I am not by, to make them pray when they get up. I come home in the middle of the day to cook a bit of dinner for us all, and I hurry back again. I return at night when they are gone to bed. For their breakfasts and suppers they go to the cupboard themselves, when my husband is not within. On the days that I have no work, here is my poor mother to be waited upon; and sometimes I sit up with her the night. If at home, I have the house to clean; all the necessaries to buy; and to mend and patch our rags. "Ah! Sir, I have no heart to set about a thing which I understand so little,"

The tears came into her eyes, as she finished her sentence. "Your case," I said, "is very deplorable, most certainly; but every thing which you mention shews more and more the absolute necessity of sending your children to my schools. That measure alone would at once do away with half your difficulties and miseries. Instead of wandering about you know not where, they would be in a safe place. Instead of being ragged for ever, they would in time, if well behaved, be decently clothed. Your boy, you may remember, who was only a few months at school,

got shoes and stockings. Instead of being wild, like an ass's colt, they would learn something of manners. Instead of being utterly ignorant, they would be taught to read and write, and would hear of their Maker and Redeemer; and worship their God on his holy Sabbaths, in his holy place; and become acquainted with all their duties to God and man. And who knows, but that in a short time, by God's help, they might be able to read their Bibles to *you* and your husband in the evenings, when your work is over, or on the Sundays, when you have none? Many children have done, and do this continually; and at length have made Christians of their parents, who were no better than Heathens before. Would not this be a most delightful event for a mother to think upon? Does not your heart yearn towards your own offspring, whom you bore in your bosom, and nourished from your breast? And remember what your blessed Saviour said, when his disciples would have kept the little children from him: 'Suffer them to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.' Pray, pray, pray, my good woman, do not you yourself, their mother, cause them to belong to the kingdom of the devil!"

She was overcome, and sobbed aloud. I continued. "But your husband, you tell me, does

not second your endeavours. I wish I could see him, so as to be able to talk to him. You know very well, that I have never found him at home, except once, when you were all at dinner. I dare say that I speak within compass, when I assert, that I have been fifty times at your house without meeting with him." "It is very true, Sir," she answered; "and it is a great pity; and I understand clearly, that you could not stop him in the street, and have time there to talk to him on such a subject as this." "No," I said, "it would require an hour to do it properly, and so as to have the best chance of persuading him. I fear, indeed, that there is one of the greatest difficulties to be overcome, namely, to convince him first, that his own mode of life is ill chosen and most wretched; miserable here, and leading to intolerable misery hereafter. If he thinks his own life a happy one, then he will wish his children to follow his steps; if we could make him think otherwise, I hope that he loves his children well enough not to desire to see them unhappy, or in poverty, wickedness, and disgrace. And it seems surprising to *me*, that his own history, and the history of his poor sister and brother, who are gone, and the present circumstances of those who are alive, and the warnings of the dead and the dying, and the counsels of his aged mother,

who lies here under God's hand, have not already convinced him, that true happiness is to be found only in the paths of religion and virtue. But you must try again; and I too will try, if I can get opportunities; and *you*, my poor old friend," I said, turning to the sick woman, "*you* also must try once more, whether, when you are about to quit him for ever, he will be more disposed to obey you, than in the days of your health and strength."

During this conversation I had observed that old Mrs. Barton was variously affected, but that her countenance scarcely ever ceased to betray the inward feelings of self-accusation and remorse. How could it indeed escape her, when she was now examining her past life with more accuracy and strictness, and when to make excuses was of no avail; how must it not have preyed upon her spirits, when she was going to give an account of her conduct to one who knew precisely what it had been; that the very miseries, which we were all of us so desirous to correct, had been occasioned, in a great degree, by her own neglect of her children in their youth? Her answer to my recommendation partook of these feelings. "Ah! Sir," she said, "I am bound in every way to do what you desire. Am not I his mother? Are not the children my grand-children? But still more; have

not I, by my bad management, a great many years ago, been the cause of this evil? God forgive me! Certainly, Sir, I will try once more for my own sake, and for their's; for my own, that I may make some amends, if possible, for my former errors; for their's, because though I am myself now called away from this world, I am anxious for *their* condition in it, and that we may meet again in the next. Oh! pray for us, Sir; pray for us all; may God have mercy upon us! and may Jesus Christ have mercy upon us!"

Being thus invited, I knelt down without any further remark, and read the Collects for the first and fourth Sundays after the Epiphany, for the second Sunday in Advent, and for the fourth and fifth Sundays after Easter, and lastly for the seventh Sunday after Trinity; then giving them the benediction, I left them.

The immediate consequences of this conversation were good. Without my seeing him, William Barton sent three of his children to the schools. They told him, it seems, as much as they could recollect of what I had said; and, I believe, they hinted besides, that he must never expect any assistance from *me*, in the troubles that might befal him, if he suffered his children to grow up like drabs and vagabonds. And this argument had probably some weight with him.

I had not commissioned them to use it in the present case; but it was becoming pretty generally known, that in the select vestry I discouraged the applications of all such persons, and made great difficulties about relieving them out of my private funds.

It is not my intention to record all that passed between myself and Mrs. Barton, in the numerous visits which I made to her cottage, during so protracted a sickness. Much of it was precisely the same as occurred in a hundred other cases. It struck me more and more with surprise, when I thought of it, which I did frequently, that in attending upon the daughter and the son, as I have already mentioned, and now the old mother, I had not once met with the father of the family; and I had reason to suppose, that in some way or other he knew of my approach, and always contrived to escape before I reached the door. In his present dwelling indeed I could easily account for .e one and the other. It had two doors on opposite sides, and a window near to each door; and on one side there was a narrow foot-path, between two hedges, long and straight, leading directly to the window on that side. This foot-path, after winding round the end of the cottage, went off on the other side in a straight direction also, but not visible at so great a distance on

account of some other cottages which had lately sprung up and contracted the view. However, on which ever side I might happen to approach, he might see me for a longer or shorter period, and have abundance of time to get away, if he chose it. And this, it seems probable, he must have done frequently; whether it were, that a person of his description had some vague undefined alarm with respect to a minister of religion, or that he had no wish at all to engage in any religious act, or that he was quite ignorant of religion itself.

After missing him so often then, I was equally surprised at last to catch him. He had not kept a vigilant look out, and thus was taken. That he did not court a meeting with me was evident, because, the moment I unexpectedly entered, he began to bustle about, and to sidle off towards the open door. But I laid my hand upon him, and put him under arrest; and "whither away so fast?" I said: "we must become acquainted with each other, John. I have been a long time without seeing you; and you are getting old, very old. A little talk with *me* now and then may be of use to you, John. Besides, I am come here to pray with your poor wife; and why should you go away without joining with us?"

By the time that I had spoken so far, he had

taken off his hat, and made up his mind to stay; but he looked stupid, and said nothing. Then, remembering that beautiful speech which Homer puts into the mouth of Nestor's youngest son, upon the arrival of Telemachus at Pylus in the midst of a sacrifice, I continued thus. "You pray sometimes, I presume, to the great God above us, who made and governs the world; for it would be strange indeed, if, in so long a life, and with those grey hairs, you had not yet discovered that you stand in need of his help and favour. Ah! John, John, there is not a man upon earth who could exist for a moment without his providence."

The ignorant old man seemed quite bewildered; I therefore put the question to him plainly and directly, "Do you ever pray to God?" "Yes, Sir; Oh! yes," he replied; "I pray to him, when I have time." "Then pray to him now," I said, "or listen to *me*, whilst *I* pray. Will you ever have a better opportunity, or greater cause? Is not your poor wife here, the very stay of your life? What will become of you, if God should take her away from you?" The old man was moved a little, and answered, "I hope, Sir, I shall go first; for without her my life will be very lone and unked." "Is not this then," I asked, "sufficient reason for praying to God, and desiring him to spare her to

you; or, if he see fit to take her, that he would enable you to bear her loss?" "To be sure it is," he replied. "Kneel down then," I said, "and whilst I open the Prayer-Book, think of some of your most pressing wants, that God only can relieve; think how great and good a being God is; think how you yourself have offended him by your numerous sins; by despising his holy Sabbaths; by the neglect of public worship and private prayer. What will be your lot in the next world, unless God be gracious to you beyond what you deserve; beyond what you appear even to desire! Have you ever heard that after your death you will rise again to life, and be tried by a just impartial Judge, who will sentence you to everlasting fire, if you shall have gone out of this world without repentance, and without making your peace with God through Jesus Christ?"

"I have heard it all," was his answer; "my wife there has told me." "Then you know very well," I said," what to pray for; and these things should never be out of your head, even whilst you are hedging and ditching, or whatever daily labour you are about. But now kneel down." He was preparing to lean with his knees against a chair. "No, no!" I said, "*that* will never do. You have the greatest things to ask for, that man ever had; and will God hear you, do

you think, and grant your prayers, if you pray to him in such a posture as that?" The poor old man now went down upon his knees on the floor.

This happened to be a day on which Mrs. Barton was in a great agony of pain; so I read without much alteration the whole of the prayer for a sick person when there appeareth small hope of recovery. She joined in it with fervency, and seemed to derive wonderful comfort from the sight of her husband thus humbling himself before his Maker in the act of prayer. To read so as to be heard and understood by the old man, required great exertion, and was very fatiguing. For this reason therefore, and for others, I read but little. It was a rule with me never, if possible, to omit the Lord's Prayer. I read it now, and afterwards a few sentences out of the Visitation Psalm, altered, and shortened, or enlarged, so as to touch both their cases, in the following manner.

"O Lord God Almighty, incline thine ear unto us, and save us! Cast us not away in the time of age, when we are grey-headed; forsake us not, when our strength faileth us! Through *thee* have we been holden up ever since we were born; thou art *he* that took us out of our mother's womb; be thou our strong hold, whereunto we may always fly. O God, go not thou far

from us! O God, haste thee to help us! Who is like unto *thee?* As for *us,* our hope and trust is in thee; we will patiently abide alway, and praise thee more and more."

After this I concluded with the benediction of St. Paul; and upon departing I besought the old man, now that he had happily begun this great duty of prayer, never to omit it morning, noon, or night; not to pray only when he appeared to have nothing else to do, but to borrow time for it from other things; and to kneel sometimes at the bed of his sick wife, and to pray there. "*Your* death-bed," I said, must now be near at hand; *your* clock must now be nearly run down." The striking of the clock at that instant suggested the image to my mind. "It is fit that you should be ready to meet your great Master, who will call you so soon, and reckon with you. What a fearful thing it will be for you to fall into the hands of an offended Almighty God! Try therefore to make your peace with him, before you go hence, and be no more seen. His Son, Jesus Christ, died for you, to enable you to do this. Plead therefore his merits without delay, and entreat God to send his Holy Spirit to dwell in you; to cleanse you from all sin; and to put good thoughts and desires into your heart."

So I finished, and left them. At the next visit

he was there again; whether voluntarily, or not, I cannot tell; but he was sitting, and made no attempt to go away as before. His face indeed seemed very sorrowful; and his wife said almost immediately, "My poor old man, Sir, has got a cold to-day, and has lost his appetite, and is quite unked like." It was noon, and I enquired if he had been at work that morning; and finding that he had, I said to him, "You had better stay at home this afternoon, and take care of your cold; and then, by God's blessing, you may be well again to-morrow." "No, no, Sir," he answered; "I have a hedge and ditch to finish; and I am not so bad yet as not to go on with my work." "Very well then," I said, "we will kneel together, and pray with your wife, and ask God's blessing for you and for her; and thank him for giving her so much ease to-day." She had enjoyed a quiet night, and seemed much refreshed by it.

I selected the 34th Psalm, and adapted it to my purpose. I then read the Lord's Prayer, the two prayers at the end of the Litany, with slight alterations, and the benediction at the end of the Visitation-service, addressing it to them both. After this he seemed to be in a hurry to go out to his work, as if late, and beyond his time; so I took my leave without any further observation.

Very early the next morning I received a message to entreat me to come to him immediately, as he was supposed to be at the point of death. Some business, however, which could not be put off, having detained me longer than I could have wished, I did not arrive at the cottage until an hour after the time when I was expected. Upon entering I looked round for him; thinking that I should probably have seen him in the same bed with his wife. She told me that he was up stairs, and that the doctor had said there was no hope of his recovery. The seizure was in his bowels. I hastened to go to him; and as I went, she reminded me how little he knew. "Yes," I said, "and he is so deaf too." "Aye, indeed," she replied; "God help him."

I mounted the stairs without any expectation of being able to be useful to this poor man. I found him quite alone, sitting upright in his bed; but I was followed almost immediately by two women, who knelt at once by the bed-side. He looked certainly like a man who had suffered racking pain for some hours; but I saw no appearances of death about him, and he was sitting up without any support. However, after what I had heard I treated him as a dying man.

He seemed glad to see me; and I touched his hand, and said, putting my mouth close to his ear, "I hope, my poor old friend, that your pains

are not so great as to prevent you from praying to your God and your Saviour, to help you in this last journey which you are going to take, and to bring you into the happy place." "I am very bad, Sir, indeed," he answered; "but I could pray, if I knew how."

One of the women here told me that his deafness was surprisingly abated, and I soon found it to be the fact; so that I was happily not under the necessity of straining my voice to its utmost pitch, to cause him to hear me. This was a providential event, and I said, "God is very good to you in enabling you to hear me so easily at this awful moment." "Yes, Sir," he replied; "I hear all they say now. My hearing came back to me about an hour ago." "Well," I said, "thank God for it! For you may prepare yourself the better to meet him. I can say more to you now than I could otherwise have done, if you had remained deaf; and also these good women may read to you out of the Bible, and other good books, a little at a time to instruct and to comfort you. Do you think that you shall have strength enough to get over this disorder?"

"No, no, Sir," he answered, shaking his head; "I shall never get over it. My wife expected to go first; but I shall go before her, and very soon." "Do you know," I enquired,

"how long that other world is to last, into which you are now going so fast?" "Yes, Sir," was his answer; "my wife read it to me, out of a little book of your's, that the next world was never to come to any end." "And," I enquired again, "did she read to you also, that in the other world there was to be the greatest happiness in heaven for all good Christians, and the most dreadful misery in hell-fire for all bad Christians, and these too for ever?" "Yes, Sir," was his reply, "she did." "Which then," I enquired still further, "do you wish for yourself? To be happy without end, or to be punished without end?" "You need not ask me such a question as *that*, Sir; I am no scholar, but I am not a fool."

I was glad to hear him speak thus, and with some degree of warmth, for a man apparently so ignorant and listless; so I said, "I did not ask you the question, because I had any doubt whether you liked happiness or punishment most; but to rouse your attention to those things, and to fix your mind upon them. Have you done, or are you doing so?" "Ah! Sir," he replied, "it is a heavy concern." "It is indeed," I continued; "the very heaviest concern that any man can have; whether that man be a king, or a beggar; whether he be young, or old; whether he be in good health, or on his death-

bed, as you think yourself now to be. It is the heaviest concern for all men, in all situations; but to a dying man it may appear to be a much heavier concern than to others. They may put off the thinking about it, if they will; but a dying man cannot put it off any longer, if he wish at all to save his soul. You tell me that you do so wish; for to be happy instead of being miserable for ever, and to save your own soul, mean the same thing. What are you doing then, to make this heavy concern turn out well? You told me, that you could pray to God, in spite of your pain, if you knew how. Do you confess yourself to be a sinner?"

"To be sure I do, Sir," he answered; "but there are many worse." "Very likely," I said; "but how will *that* help *you*? Think no more about it, I beg of you; it does not signify to *you* two farthings, two straws even, what other people may be. They must give an account for themselves; and you must give an account for *yourself*. You allow that you are a sinner; think of *that* only; *that* is quite enough for you to make you tremble and fear what may become of you, when you die. For no sinner, continuing to be a sinner wilfully, and without repentance, can possibly be saved. If you know this then, do you not know what to pray for? And cannot you also find out how to pray? Cannot

you raise up your eyes towards heaven, and clasp your hands together, and cry out, O Lord God, be merciful, I beseech thee, to *me* a sinner!" "Yes," he replied, "I could do *that*, and heartily too, if *that* were all, and if *that* might save me." "I cannot tell you," I said, "what may possibly be enough to save your soul; but as you know yourself to be a sinner, you may be sure that it must be proper and right for you to ask God to have mercy upon you." "Why, yes, to be sure," he answered, "so it must; and I will do what you have taught me directly." Then looking upwards, and clasping his hands, he exclaimed, not without feeling, "God have mercy upon me, and save me; for I am a sinner!"

I was affected and pleased. A little light had been shed upon the darkness of this poor old man's understanding; his heart had been touched with the sense of one great want at the least; and he had prayed with some earnestness to have that want supplied. I beheld him with compassion, and I determined to use my best endeavours to carry him still further. So I said, "I am delighted to hear you pray in that manner; and, if you were no better informed, thus you might go on to pray, till death close your eyes, and stiffen your hands, and put your tongue to silence. But suppose God should say, "you are convicted out of your own mouth of being a

sinner; of having broken my laws; why should I have mercy upon your soul? Have I not told you in my Bible, and you might have heard it at my Church, the soul that sinneth, it shall surely die? Must I pardon you now, upon your death-bed, for a whole life of sin, and disobedience to my commands, merely because you ask me to pardon you, and because you feel perhaps great fear for the future, and some sorrow for the past? What reason can you give? Would it be just? Would it be wise? If God should talk to you in this manner, how would you answer him?"

The poor old man, beginning to be penitent, was cast down immediately, and said, "I could not answer him at all. Teach me, Sir, if there be any way of doing it. I can never find it out myself." "*That* I will, my poor old friend," I replied; "for I am pleased to hear you say, that you wish to be taught. You feel as you ought to feel; you are sorry to be so ignorant, at such a time, when you have so heavy a concern upon your hands; this is a right disposition, with which God himself will be pleased too; for he loves the humble, the contrite, the poor in spirit."

His woeful face, wrinkled with age, and pain, and care, was smoothed and brightened a little, and his troubled mind somewhat eased and ele-

vated, as I thought, by this little tribute of praise. The manner in which he looked up towards me, as I stood over his bed, was very touching and piteous; and I thought the time was come when I might preach Christ to him with success.

I said therefore, "You want to know what right you have to expect God's forgiveness. I will tell you. In yourself you have no right at all, nor the shadow of a claim to such a blessing; but you have a great and powerful friend, who sits at God's right hand; who is God's own dearly beloved Son; the same who came down from heaven into this lower world, and whilst he was here was called Jesus Christ; he is continually asking his Father to forgive sinners; and his Father has promised to do it, if they pray for pardon in his Son's name, and put their whole faith and trust in him, and are heartily sorry for all their misdoings. And there is no wonder that God the Father should make such a promise to God the Son, who is Jesus Christ. For, when God the Father was about to punish sinners in the most terrible manner for dishonouring his holy Sabbaths, and breaking his most excellent commandments, his Son, Jesus Christ, undertook to suffer punishment in their stead, if his Father would be so gracious as to spare them. Accordingly he became man 1800

years ago, and, after he had taught and done here on earth the most wonderful things, which shewed him to have the power of God, he was seized by wicked blood-thirsty men, and nailed through his hands and feet to two great beams of wood, in the form of a cross, and thus he died by a lingering death, in the utmost agonies of pain. Is not this now a most astonishing thing, that the Son of God should have made himself like one of *us*, and should have suffered so much sorrow, and should have undergone that cruel, shameful, and accursed death on the cross, to save wretched sinners from the lake that burns with everlasting fire and brimstone? Does it not shew you how much he pitied them? Does it not assure you, that he will do whatever else is needful for their good, if they love him, and obey him?

"Besides, he has told us so himself, in the book called the Gospel, in which the history of him is written. There he says, that he came to call sinners to repentance, and that no man who comes to him shall by any means be cast out; but that he will pray to his Father for them, and will raise them up from their graves, as he raised himself, and will carry them with him to heaven. Now then, my poor old friend, you understand, I hope, that when you say, God be merciful to

me a sinner, you should add, for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son, who died to save sinners, and me amongst the rest. This should be the form of your prayer: 'O God, I do not ask thee to be merciful to me on account of any merit or deserts of my own, but for the vast and wonderful merits of Jesus Christ. I do not ask it of thee, because I am sorry for my past sins, and repent of them, and resolve to forsake all sin for the rest of my life; but because Jesus Christ has suffered the punishment due to sin in his own person, and has made satisfaction for it. It is in this that I place all my trust. Yet I will repent to the best of my power.' Thus you should pray, and on this ground you may hope to be forgiven. For now, you see, how God may pardon sin, and yet be just; his justice was fully satisfied by Christ's sufferings. Now you see again, how God may pardon sin, and yet be wise; his infinite wisdom indeed found out this only method, whereby to pardon the sinner without encouraging sin itself; and whereby to urge him to repent, by the strongest motives of fear, and love, and gratitude, and hope, and trust. Do you understand what I say to you?"

"Not all, Sir," he answered; "no, I cannot pretend that I do." "But," said I, "you understand, so far, I suppose, that, whatever you pray for, you must pray for in the name of Jesus

Christ." "Yes," he replied; "I understand *that* very well, and something of the reason why." "The reason," I said, "to put it very shortly, is no other than this; Jesus Christ made an agreement with God to save sinners; sinners can only be saved by *that* agreement; to *that* alone therefore must they look, and *that* alone must they plead, when they pray for pardon; and when they ask it for Jesus Christ's sake, they remind God of *that* agreement, and shew that they trust in nothing else. So much I think you understand; and when you turn it over in your thoughts, you will know, I am sure, not only for what to pray, but also how to do it." "I shall indeed," said the sick man, "a great deal better than ever I knew before." "Well then," I said, "here we will stop talking for the present, lest it should be too much for your strength; and I will kneel down and pray by you." "Thank you, Sir," was his answer; "if you please."

Having knelt down, I first selected such sentences from the Confessions, as I thought most likely to come home to him; and I desired him to repeat them after me aloud, or to think of them silently in his own mind, so as to see that they applied to himself. He did not follow me aloud, but seemed to be fully sensible of the general meaning of the thing. I then rose and

pronounced the Absolution, from the Communion-service. After which I read the Lord's Prayer, and the blessing, and thus left him.

Being come down stairs into the room below, where his wife was lying, I said to her, "Your poor husband is in a much more favourable state than I could have imagined to be likely. I feared that he would have been now, as he has appeared to me to be for so many years, quite listless and indifferent about God, his Saviour, and religion altogether. But he is not so; he is humble and teachable; he confesses that he is a sinner, and consequently that he deserves punishment; and he desires to learn how he may obtain forgivenes, escape that punishment, and be happy for ever in the next world. So far I have instructed him; and he can now pray with understanding, when he prays in the name of Jesus Christ. He knows what Jesus Christ has done for him; and why he did it; and that God, who is perfectly wise and just, and who therefore cannot act so as to encourage sin, or suffer his laws to be broken without punishment, may now for Christ's sake pardon sinners, if they repent with sincerity, and believe in their Saviour, and depend entirely upon the covenant which he sealed for them with his blood. I have not used these words exactly to your husband, but other plainer ones, the meaning of which he

seemed at last to comprehend. But what do you think yourself of this matter? Did *he* wish to see me, or was it *you* that sent for me?"

"Oh, Sir," she answered, "he was very desirous indeed to see you; and he would have sent to you in the middle of the night, if we would have let him. And when we did send to you, and you could not come immediately, he was sadly disappointed, and grew very impatient, and cried out over and over again, 'The man will never come! the man will never come! I shall be dead without seeing him, and without a prayer!'" "I am truly glad," I said, "to hear all this. His heart is changed undoubtedly; God has taken away the hard stone out of it. Who knows but that he may be still further gracious; and, though your poor old man has only begun to work at the end of a long day, that out of his great bounty he may bestow some reward upon him? Do you remember the parable of the labourers in the vineyard?"

"That I do, Sir," very well," she replied eagerly; "and it has always been a great comfort to me; and I hope that my husband and myself shall get the penny from a bountiful Lord and Master. Ah! Sir, if you had seen the poor old man last night, you would have felt for him almost as I did. He seemed to be sure that his hour was fast coming. For he looked

at me, with his eyes fixed steadily upon me, for two or three minutes; and when at last he put his foot upon the first step of the stairs, he turned round towards me, and said, 'God bless you! You have been a good wife to me. God bless you! I shall never see you any more.' The Lord alone knows how this may be; but he came home from his work in the evening much worse than when you saw him in the middle of the day; and in the night, as I have told you before, he was seized with the bowel-complaint; and the doctor says it is all over with him."

She was touched with her own story, and could not proceed any further; so I endeavoured to comfort her by telling her, that I was not without great hopes with respect to his soul; and that, as I was going further on, and might come back *that* way, I would call again, and talk and pray with him a little more. She thanked me, and I departed.

Returning in about two hours, I went up to him at once. His eyes were closed, as if he were dying. A woman who was in the chamber, a sister of old Mrs. Barton's, told me that his pain was almost gone, but that his strength seemed much diminished; and that since I had left him, he had slumbered continually in the manner which I now saw. He could not eat any thing, she said, of any sort or kind. I asked her if he

had ever prayed; and she informed me that he had several times opened his eyes, and that then he always moved his lips, and appeared to *her* to pray. Once she had heard him mention the name of Jesus Christ, and the word, sinner.

At this moment he opened his eyes again, and saw me; and he desired to be lifted up in his bed, as he had been before, when I talked with him; but his deafness was not now such, as to make it necessary for me to be close to his ear. I and the woman raised him up into the posture which he wished; and then I sent her down stairs, that, if necessary, I might speak to him with the most perfect freedom.

A chair had been placed for me by the bedside; on which I sat down, and began to question him in the following manner. "Do you remember what I said to you, when I was here two hours ago?" "Yes, Sir, he answered; "most of it." "Have you been thinking about it, whilst I was away?" I have thought of nothing else at all," he replied. "You are in the right. Can any thing be more worth thinking about, than the saving of your soul?" "No, indeed," he said; "nothing, Sir." "And have you prayed to God to save it?" "Yes," he answered; "over and over." "For whose sake?" "For Jesus Christ's," he replied. "What then? You put no trust in yourself?" "No indeed,"

he said; "I stick to the agreement, as you taught me, Sir." "Very well," I continued. "You have had many an agreement, have you not, with different masters here on earth?" "Yes," he answered; "I have worked for a great many." "And you always abided by your agreement, and knew that it would be of no use to talk to your masters about any thing else; did you not!" "Very true, Sir," he replied; "it was just so."

"Well then; a part of the agreement which Christ made with God was, that the sinner should be penitent. Do you remember that?" "Yes, Sir," he said; "I do; and I try all I can to be penitent myself." I was glad to observe that he outstripped the order of my questions, and anticipated what was to follow. It proved that he applied every thing to his own case. I proceeded thus.

"The true penitent thinks over the actions of his life; he marks, what things he has done, which he ought not to have done; and what things he has left undone, which he ought to have done; he is sorrowful, and ashamed, and angry with himself, that he should have lived in such a manner, and that he should have broken so many of God's laws; he resolves to lead a new and a better life, if God might suffer him to live any longer; and all this time he prays without ceasing, that he may be forgiven, solely

and wholly on account of Jesus Christ, in whose death and merits he puts a firm trust and confidence. Are *you*, my poor old friend, a penitent of this sort?"

"Ah! God help me, Sir," he said; "I cannot do all that." "Well, but you think of some of the wrong things that you did continually; do you not? How you used to curse and swear, for instance? Do you think of that?" "Yes," he replied; "I did curse and swear, to be sure; but I did not mean much harm by it." "No? Not much harm by it? Why when you had a quarrel with any body; with your poor wife, who is going like yourself to stand before her Judge; with your children; or your neighbours; and you damned all their limbs, and even their souls; (I almost tremble whilst I repeat such horrible expressions) did not you mean to wish them some great harm? The words in their simple sense mean the greatest harm that can possibly happen to any man; great indeed beyond all possible imagination. To damn a man's soul is to wish that it may be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, there to burn for ever with the devil and his wicked angels."

"Ah! Sir," he answered; "I did not know *that*; I never was taught to read; I was very ignorant. God forgive me! I am sorry for it now; and I hope I have left it off. And if God

would but let me stay here a little while longer, I could repent better of my other faults."

This poor old man seemed to improve at every step; and became now a hopeful and an interesting patient; so I ventured to commend him, and said, "God will be pleased with that wish of your's, because it comes, I believe, from your heart; and if so, he will either grant it, or enable you to do without it. But I will go on to help you with your examination of yourself, that your repentance may be the more perfect, and the more pleasing to God. One of his commandments says, 'thou shalt not steal.' Were you acquainted with it?"

"I cannot deny but I was," said the old man; and he trembled. Can you lay your hand upon your heart," I enquired, "and tell me, now that you are a dying man, that you never broke that commandment?" "I will say no such thing," he replied; "I should be a liar, if I did. But I did not thieve, Sir, like many do. Some of my masters, I am sure, will give me a good character. Ask *them*." "Yes, my poor friend," I said; "some men may give you a good character, because they know little about you, or because they desire to do you a kindness. But all you want now is a good character with God, who knows every thing about you; even those actions that were never seen by any human eye;

and who has no respect of persons, and cannot be partial to any man, without reason, or justice; and who is besides so thoroughly pure and holy, as to hate and abominate the very least dishonesty in the world. Can you stand before *him*, and think to deceive him, and to prevail over him, by pleading that you did not thieve like many do?"

The old man trembled more and more, and said, "Ah! Sir, I have been worse than I was willing to think; but I will hide nothing." "You cannot," I answered immediately. "From *me* you may; from God you cannot. Confess every thing to *him* in your thoughts, which indeed he knows already; but he is pleased with the confessions of a sinner; and the more particular the confession is, the better. But, I fear, my poor old man, from what I have heard, when you come to think strictly about it, as a dying man should do, you will find your sins of this sort to be more in number than the very hairs of your head, and quite impossible to be reckoned up. If you have committed great thefts, such as the stealing of sheep and things of that value, I suppose that you could never forget them; but what *you* perhaps would call little thefts, or no thefts at all; which the righteous God however will utterly condemn; these may have been so numerous and so little regarded at the time, as

to have now quite slipped out of your memory. But it is not so with God. He noted it down in his book, whenever you robbed your neighbour's garden, or hen-roost; nay, whenever you tore a stake out of his hedge, or a rail from his paling."

"The Lord have mercy upon me!" cried out the old man, still more alarmed. "I never understood this, Sir; and I hope God will not be hard with me, ignorant as I was." "For Christ's sake," I said, "God will certainly deal mercifully with you, provided you are penitent; and it is to make you truly so, that I mention all these things to you. You, it seems, would have passed them over without repentance; and then you would have been charged with them, to your great surprise and dismay, in the terrible hour of judgment. And now perhaps I ought to go on to other things; but, I hope, you will be able, by this example that I have given you, to search all your conduct to the very bottom; and to accuse, and condemn yourself for your own faults; that God, seeing how severe you are against yourself, may pity, pardon, and save you. And, whilst you search your conduct, be sure not to forget the things undone, as well as the things done; more especially how you have lived to all appearance without a God in the world, never having gone to church to pray to

him in public, and never, or scarcely ever, having fallen on your knees at home to pray to him in private. The total neglect of your family too, in consequence of which and of your bad example, your children have grown up to be what we now see them, must make a serious, an awful part of your repentance."

"Ah! Sir," he exclaimed; "I see I have been very wicked. I never thought of this before; and now I shall have no time to repent of it as I ought. What will become of me; and what must I do?" "You can do nothing at all," I said, "by your own strength alone; but there is another, whom I have mentioned to you before, who can enable you to do every thing, even in the shortest space of time. For *his* help you must pray, whilst you can pray at all. I speak of God the Holy Ghost; whose peculiar office it is to help your infirmities, and to fill you with godly sorrow and to make you holy; and Jesus Christ has told us that his blessed Spirit will be given to those who ask for him. In short the Bible assures us with respect to every thing which is good for us; 'ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' Now then, my poor old friend, you know what you are to do, and I shall leave you to your own thoughts, after a single prayer.

Your disorder has reduced you too much for further conversation, or I should have talked to you about the Sacrament."

He seemed much exhausted, and made me no answer. I called up the woman; we laid him gently down on his back; and then I read the commendatory prayer lest I might not see him again, shook him by the hand, and left him with my blessing. I was late, and could not stop to speak to the old woman below. This was Saturday. To visit him on Sunday was scarcely possible. Very early on Monday morning before I could get to him he died.

"My poor old man is dead, Sir," said Mrs. Barton, as I entered the house. "Yes," I answered; "I heard it as I came along. God, I hope, had compassion upon him, and forgave him, and has taken him to himself. He was ignorant, very ignorant; but desirous to do what he could; and God, for Christ's sake, is merciful."

She lifted up her hands in silent prayer to that gracious Being, who spares when we deserve punishment. Having paused 'till she changed her attitude, I enquired if he had said any thing about the Sacrament. "No, Sir," she replied; "nor did he understand what it meant. After you left him, he spoke very little; and scarcely ever but whilst he was pray-

ing. So my sister told me; and very glad indeed I was to hear it. Alack! Sir; he never used to pray." "I believe not," I said; "but by God's help we taught him to do it in his last days, and he did do it; and so far his spirit was renewed within him. If it had pleased the God of all mercy to give us a little more time, he might have been instructed in the nature of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and might have longed for it, and I might have administered it to him. He is gone without it; without eating of his blessed Saviour's body, and without drinking of his blood. But he knew nothing of that sacred institution, nor of the mighty benefits which it is intended to convey to the humble and faithful communicant. He could not therefore hunger and thirst after *that* of which he was uninformed. Indeed he might have been informed of it. But we must not press this matter too far; we shall soon be lost in our own reasonings. Let us leave it to God; with *him* nothing is impossible; and it is his property to forgive sins. After the best which the best of us can do we shall still be found wanting in his sight, and have need enough of forgiveness. But tell me, how do you mean to bury the corpse?"

"My, sons," she said, "will do it. They promised their father that they would, when he first gave himself up; and they have promised

the same to *me*, when I die; which must soon be. God knows where the money is to come from! But it would disgrace us to be carried to our graves in a parish-coffin, and not to be taken into the church."

"Your sons will do well," I replied, "to bury you both respectably. Not that it really matters to yourselves whether your coffins be worse, or better; or the funeral service shorter or longer; or whether the great, or the little bell be tolled. In a few years after the body has been committed to the ground; earth to earth; ashes to ashes; dust to dust; it will be the same with the king as with the day-labourer. Neither will all his pomp and parade carry the king to heaven; nor will the wretched poverty of the other prevent him from getting thither. Repentance towards God, and faith towards Jesus Christ, are all in all. But to your sons it *does* matter. And if they should desert the dead bodies of their parents, and leave it to the parish-officers to see them laid in their graves, it would justly stir up a general cry of shame; especially against your unmarried sons, who ought to be fully able to bear this expence. I am glad to hear that they have resolved upon it."

"Aye, Sir, they have always been kind to their poor father and mother," she said; "and always ready to share with us whatever they had.

It is a pity that they have taken so bad a turn in the rest of their doings. But God be merciful to them, and bring them to repentance! I shall pray for them with my last breath." "Do so," I replied; "and the prayer of sincerity and faith may not return empty into your own bosom, but draw down from above a blessing upon your children." After this I read to her a small portion of the Psalms, the Lord's Prayer, and the Benediction; and so took my leave.

At my first visit to old Mrs. Barton after the funeral of her husband, I observed, that she was much changed for the worse, and that probably she would shortly follow him. On the same day too she was deeply dejected in her spirits, and afflicted with severe pain. Nevertheless, being quite alone, she was desirous of talking, and she asked me what I thought of the burial. "It was very proper," I answered, "and very creditable to your sons; and the behaviour of every body was as decent, and as orderly, and indeed as solemn, as could have been wished. They seemed to feel what we were about, and that their own turn might come they knew not how soon. But there was one of your younger sons, who was more affected than the rest; and his eyes were quite red with weeping. "Aye, Sir," she said, "that was John, who is just discharged from prison. He was

but just in time to follow his old father to his grave."

She was now nearly past crying; but I marked a single tear in the hollow below her eye. I expressed my hope that those tears of her son might be the beginnings of a true repentance; and "*then*," I said to her, "you yourself would have to shed only tears of joy. God does not afflict us at random, but only for our good; our tears give him no pleasure, except they be tears of penitence; may your son's tears be such, and he will accept both *them*, and *him*." Ah! Sir," she answered, "I wish it may be so? But I fear; and I am going away with sorrow in my heart about it." "Be calm," I said, "and try to compose yourself, and patiently to submit your own will to God's will. I will kneel down, and read to you, and pray with you."

I then read the latter exhortation in the visitation-service; and, pursuing the path there pointed out, I questioned her, as to the great articles of our holy faith; all which she affirmed that she stedfastly believed; and next, with respect to her repentance; which appeared to be as full and complete as was likely for a person in her condition. "If any thing, which you have done in the course of your life," I said, "now weighs heavily upon your mind; confess

it; not to *me;* unless it were for the purpose of doing justice to any injured person; but to God. Do not confess generally that you are a sinner, which is every body's case; but make a special confession; name all your weighty sins by their names, and go through all the aggravations of your guilt; say why it was particularly wrong in you to have committed them, and that other persons might have been more excusable than yourself; dwell upon all this in your secret thoughts, and humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and be your own accuser; and then if you ask for it with an earnest desire, and a true humility of spirit, I will do what I have never yet done for you; I will pronounce the absolution over you."

Upon hearing this, the poor woman, who was lying at her length in the bed, reached out her hands; and, clasping them above her, with a wonderful expression of fervour and devotion; her eyes too, which were black, and yet keen and piercing, being fixed with a stedfast undeviating gaze upwards; with convulsed and quivering lips she seemed to be laying open her inmost soul to God. She was speaking rapidly, but she uttered no sounds.

The spectacle was striking in an uncommon degree. I stood in silent awe. After a few mi-

nutes exhausted by this powerful feeling she dropped her hands, and said with difficulty, "I am ready, Sir; I desire it from my heart."

Immediately I pronounced aloud the solemn form in the most solemn tone of which I was capable.

A pause ensued, but shorter than before, during which she appeared to be buried in deep thought. "This service, Sir," at length she said, "has been my constant study, since you began to attend upon my poor children and myself. I have read it over more often than I can tell you; so that I can remember every part of it; and I have observed that you never used the part which you have now read to *me*."

"It is very true," I replied; "I read it but seldom; because it will be of no benefit or true comfort, except to those, who are conscious of their unworthiness, and sinking under the load of it; deeply penitent for every transgression of God's righteous laws; looking to their Saviour alone for relief, with a perfect faith and trust in his merits; and anxious to be delivered by him from the guilt and power of sin. When I meet with such persons, who have also more than an ordinary acquaintance with their religion, then at their own desire and for their especial comfort I absolve them from their sins according to this form. God indeed has absolved them

already in his secret counsels, and will finally make it known at the day of judgment; such is his gracious promise by the Gospel to the penitent and believing; if it were not so, what the minister does would be of no avail; he only pronounces the fact, being assured of the faithfulness of God that he has ratified it in heaven. To no others would it signify at all, except to delude them, for the minister to pronounce this form of absolution.

Our blessed Lord, Jesus Christ, indeed gave to the Apostles the power of remitting sins; and this power has come down to all Christian ministers, who have been regularly appointed to succeed the Apostles. But this power must be consistent with the terms of the Gospel itself; and therefore we do not presume to exercise it of our own will, and in a partial arbitrary manner. Nor would God above ratify our deed. It would be a great abuse of our office to do so, and might be very destructive also to the souls of men. If the sinner were not yet truly penitent, and had not yet arrived at a lively faith in Christ; and trusted nevertheless in the absolution of the minister, so far as to cast off all further care for his salvation; the consequences would be very dreadful. I have absolved *you*, because I am satisfied that you are a sincere and penitent believer; such a one as God himself

would absolve; although you yourself in your humility might have doubted about your own condition. What I have done was not at all necessary to your salvation. It was intended, coming from God's minister, to re-assure and strengthen your drooping mind. Take therefore the comfort of what I have done, and avoid the danger of it. Do not rest in it, I mean; but go on to make your repentance more perfect, and your faith more stedfast. Then most assuredly will God himself, at the last day, confirm my present act, and acquit you of all sin for ever."

"I hope, Sir," she said with great feeling, "that I shall be grateful, and still humble; not puffed up with pride, nor forgetful of the duties, which are yet in my power to perform. But from the account which you have now given me, I am at a loss how to understand the Absolutions in the Morning and Evening Services; and in the Communion. The whole congregation, and all the communicants, cannot be true penitents, or true believers; and yet you appear to absolve them all alike."

"No," I answered, "it is not so. I read indeed a form of words in the Morning and Evening Services, which is called the Absolution; but I do no more than tell the congregation, in that form, for their encouragement and conso-

lation after the confession of their sins, that God pardons and absolves all *them* that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel. I do not there exercise the power, which however I mention as belonging to me, of declaring in my own person that the penitent are absolved and forgiven. Nor again do I exercise it in the office for the Communion. What is there called the Absolution is a simple wish or prayer, on the part of the minister, that God may have mercy on all the communicants, and pardon their sins, and bring them to everlasting life. You have been misled by the name. All the three forms are called Absolutions; but the first merely declares whom God will pardon; and the second expresses a devout desire that God may pardon all who are then at his altar; the third which is in the Visitation-service, and which I have just pronounced over *you*, is the only proper Absolution; but it must be understood in the manner in which I have endeavoured to explain it to you; not as necessary to your salvation; nor as if *I* were the person who forgave you your sins; but acting in the name of *him*, who alone is able to forgive sin; and acting as his minister and instrument, whom he has authorized and employs to declare his great mercy to sinners; for the express comfort and satisfaction of your conscience troubled with the remembrance of

many iniquities, and longing earnestly for an authoritative assurance that God accepts your faith and penitence; I have pronounced this particular form of absolution, being assured by the glad tidings of the Gospel that a person under the circumstances in which I suppose *you* to be, is indeed forgiven in heaven. Do you understand this matter now?"

"I think I do, Sir," she answered; "and I am sure of one thing; that I ought to receive great comfort from knowing, that you have a favourable opinion of my case. For, if your opinion had not been favourable, you would not have absolved me. But I will follow your advice, and not stop idly here. I will pray, not only that I may endure to the end, as I now am; but also that I may get onward to something better. Is it not St. Paul, Sir, who says, we must reach forward to those things which are before?" "It is," I replied; "until we come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. And now I must bid you farewel for to-day. I will see you again, if God think fit." I touched her hand, and hurried away; not daring to mark her feelings.

From this time; although she lived some weeks, and I saw her often; she shewed no

disposition to enter into any further conversation with me. I generally enquired of any person that might happen to be in the cottage, how she was; and then of herself whether I should pray with her; to which she always gladly assented. But towards the last, when I put the same question to her, her answer was, that she wished me to choose one prayer, the most beautiful of all. I read in consequence with a slight alteration the prayer for a sick person when there appeareth small hope of recovery. As I left the room she followed me with her eyes; evidently intending to shew that she did not expect to see me again in this world. It was a most solemn farewel; and I shall never forget it.

However she was alive the next day; and, as they assured me, still in the possession of her faculties; and I read the Commendatory Prayer. But she did not once raise up her eyes towards me to give me a single look. Her hands were within the bed-clothes, so that I could not touch them. Her soul was purged from all earthly cares. It was waiting in still patience and in an awful calm for the signal of separation from the body, that it might mount to heaven to its God and Saviour.

This solemn sight arrested and fixed my attention for many minutes; but at length recol-

lecting my duties, and standing over her with my hands outstretched, I pronounced aloud the following benediction.

"Unto God's gracious mercy and protection we commit thee, in this thy great extremity. The Lord bless thee, and keep thee, and overshadow thee with his wings, in the agony of this thy last conflict. The Lord be gracious unto thee, and make his face to shine upon thee, whilst thou art passing through the valley of the shadow of death. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee with a cheering and glorious light, which may give thee a foretaste of that peace, which surpasseth all understanding, and of that bliss, which is at God's right hand for evermore."

The dying woman, roused by this appropriate blessing, and the devout tone with which it was uttered, made an effort to raise her half-closed eyes towards me; but in a single instant she closed them quite; whether it were that the leaden hand of death now weighed heavily upon her eye-lids; or that she feared, by opening them, to entangle herself again with human things.

In this state I left her; being myself incapable of any thing more, if any thing more had been necessary. A few hours afterwards a messen-

ger informed me that she had breathed her last in the same undisturbed tranquillity.

At the proper time she was buried by her sons as her husband had been. When I had finished the ceremony, and was retiring from the grave; William Barton's wife, apparently deputed by the rest, came out of the crowd of mourners, and thanked me with great propriety and much feeling for every kindness which I had shewn to the family. This mark of gratitude in such a place and after such an awful rite being quite unusual and altogether unexpected, I was too much affected by it to make any other reply, than by touching my hat, and by a slight inclination of my head, as I hastened homeward.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ALMSWOMEN.—PROSELYTISM.

SECTION I.

MRS. CALLENDER, MRS. SOMERS, MRS. VINICOMB, MRS. BONNETT, MRS. HOLMES.

One day, as I was passing by the Almshouses, I heard a great hubbub among the old women; and I observed several of them at their doors talking across the court-yard to each other. I went in to see what was the cause of this unusual ferment; and having first come in contact with Mrs. Callender, I exclaimed, "Hey-day! Mrs. Callender, what's the matter now?" "Oh! Sir," she answered with much glee, "we have had a visitor here; a strange lady just come into the parish; I don't know her name, Sir; but I know where she lives." And then she described the house to me. "Well," I said; "and what of this? Has the lady been speaking with you, or giving you any thing?" "Yes, Sir, both,"

she replied; "and for *my* part, my advice is, that we should take what she gives, and thank her too; but not mind what she speaks. I am sure her speaking will do *me* no harm, and her gifts may do me good; so I am very merry about it, Sir, as you see; but some of the rest are very angry, and have taken great offence at her."

My curiosity was excited by this prelude of Mrs. Callender's; but I soon began to suspect, that the lady was looking out for proselytes amongst these poor old women; and finding them rather obstinately attached to High-Church-principles, and difficult to be won by arguments, was trying the surer method of bribing them into her opinions. I said therefore, "do not be so sure, Mrs. Callender; gifts have great power of changing people's minds; we are apt enough to think as *they* do, who seem to be kind to us; and so to give up our better judgment. If she would be content to supply your little bodily wants, and give you some tea and sugar now and then, without talking to you, and trying to unsettle your minds, it would be all very well; but I fear it is *this*, which she is aiming at; and therefore you must be constantly on your guard, and take especial care that you are not corrupted by the gifts." "You may depend upon *me*, Sir," she replied rather more gravely; "for, besides other reasons, I cannot understand

her; she uses such words, as I never heard at Church, or saw in my Bible or Prayer-book. They are Latin and Greek to *me*." "And, pray, what *are* they?" I enquired. "Oh! dear, Sir," she answered; "if you want to know more about it, you must go to Mrs. Somers; she had a great deal more talk with the lady than I had; and she is quite full of it, and will be glad to tell you every thing." "Very well," I said; "I will go then to Mrs. Somers," and away I went.

Mrs. Somers, it seems, being lame, and not able to stir from home, like Mrs. Callender, had seen the lady oftener than *her;* and indeed than any of the rest of the old women; but still she was unable to give me an intelligible account of what the lady intended to say; and, in short, I have no doubt that she misunderstood every thing; if not, nothing could well have been more absurd. Absurd it was, at all events, to talk in such a manner as to be capable of being so misunderstood; and if this strange lady had conversed much with the poor, so as to ascertain the very limited extent of their knowledge and understanding, she might have been aware, how liable these old women must be to be misled by words and phrases, which were quite new to most of them, and which, in fact, had no very definite meaning. But words and phrases seem

to make an essential part of the religion of some people; their religion would be nothing without them; and therefore, when religion is the subject of conversation, these words and phrases are ever in their mouths. I do not mean to say that this lady's religion was solely of that description; for her stay here was very short, and I never became acquainted with her; but it was evident that her language was the cant fanatic language of the conventicle, and not the sober scriptural language of the Church of England. But to return to the story.

Mrs. Somers, when I entered her cottage, was not recovered from the flurry of the last conference, which had just ended. Had I indeed been two minutes sooner, I should have encountered this female missionary upon the very field of battle. "What is the matter," I said, "my good Mrs. Somers? Who has disturbed you in this manner?" "Oh! Sir," she replied, "I am quite out of breath; and I was never so angry before in my life. We have had here one of the strangest ladies, Sir, that ever was seen in the world. Could you have thought it, Sir? She says that this Bible of mine is good for nothing. Why, there is'n't a more beautiful Bible in all the parish. I defy any body to shew me another equal to it. I have had it these fifty years. You know my Bible, Sir. You have

looked at it, and praised it very often. Look at it again, Sir; she can be no Christian, nor gentlewoman, I think, that finds fault with *my* Bible."

Thus she was running on, exhausting her scanty breath, and full of indignation against the supposed injury, which she had received. "Well, well," I said, "my good Mrs. Somers, sit you down, and compose yourself, and we will have a little talk about it. You may very properly set a high value upon this sacred book; it contains the words of eternal life. But besides *that*, it may well be a great treasure to you in itself. It is one of Barker's Bibles, which are much prized every where; these red lines are very pretty; and although you have been using it constantly for so many years, it is not much the worse for wear. Any person of common taste and judgment must be pleased with this Bible; and it is no wonder, that one who has possessed it so long, and has studied it so much, both in sickness and in health, should be a little mortified to hear it made light of. But are you quite sure, that you did not mistake the lady's meaning?"

"Oh! no, Sir," she interrupted me eagerly; "I could not mistake her; she was plain enough about *that*." "Why, what did she say?" I enquired. "Tell me, if you can remember them, the exact words." "O dear! Sir," she an-

swered, "I cannot remember one quarter of what she said. She said a great deal indeed; but this, I am sure, was a part of it. 'What is *your* Bible worth? It is good for nothing.'" "Perhaps," I said, "in speaking those words, if she did really speak them, the Lady did not lay so much stress upon the word *your*, as you yourself have now done; and so she might have meant, not *your* Bible in particular, which I hold here in my hand, but all Bibles whatsoever; the Bible itself, in general."

"Then she must be a wicked woman indeed, if she meant to speak in that manner; far more wicked than I thought her before. What, Sir? To ask, what is the Bible worth; and to say the Bible is good for nothing, surely this is very strange, Sir, and very wicked; and I cannot help lifting up my hands in astonishment at it." And so she did, whilst she spoke; and horror too was strongly marked in her countenance; for she was pious in proportion to her knowledge, and beyond it.

"Well, but," I said, "let us see our way a little. Perhaps there was something more spoken in the very same sentence, than merely those few words." "Oh! yes, Sir," she replied, "a great deal more." "Well then," I continued, "if she used many more words in the same sentence, she might possibly have meant something

very different from what you imagine. Suppose, for instance, when she came in, that she had found you reading this nice Bible of your's; and that she might have feared, lest you should put your trust in reading alone; and so to warn you of that danger, she might have said, what is your Bible worth? Your Bible is good for nothing; unless you practise what you read there."

Here she stopped me at once, not being able to restrain herself to hear me out. "I understand you very well, Sir; but I am positive that she meant nothing of that sort; for she never talks about practice, Sir. No, no! she thinks that the greater the sinner, the greater the saint. And, would you believe it, Sir? she finds fault with your discourses, and says you are not a Gospel Preacher, because you tell us that we must be good, and practise what we read, and that without holiness we shall never get to heaven. No, no, Sir! she scorns good works, and calls the doers of them your moral men, and declares that they will never be saved by the Gospel. So that you see, Sir, as clear as God's sun at noon-day, that she never could have meant to say any thing of the kind, which you have supposed."

Having now ascertained that this female stranger had been meddling with my name and

ministry, and endeavouring to undermine the confidence which was reposed in me by these aged members of my flock, I began to consider the affair as much more important than it had appeared to me before, and I was the more anxious to discover what were the actual things which she had said, and what was the impression which she had made, that I might set about more effectually to counteract her machinations.

"Do you know," I enquired, "whether she has ever been to our Church?" "No, *that* she hasn't," was her reply; "for I told her to go there, and then she would find out for herself what sort of instruction you give us, Sir, when you preach to us." "And pray," I enquired again, "what did she say to this?" "Oh, Sir," says she, 'I cannot think of such a thing as to sit under Dr. Warton. He does not preach the Gospel; he is one of your moral preachers, and will never save your souls in that way.' So I said to her, Why Ma'am, you need not sit under him in such a Church as our's. I warrant you the pew-opener will get you a sitting in the gallery; and then you may be on a level with him, or above him, if you like that better. Upon this, Sir, she was a little angry, and said, 'You mistake my meaning, good woman; to sit under a person, is to hear him, and to be instructed by him.' Oh, says I, I ask

your pardon, Ma'am; we never use such language here; but, if that be all, you cannot do better than sit under Dr. Warton, as you call it; and if the folks would not *hear* him only, but *do* what he tells them, as the Bible also bids them, then methinks they would not be far from the kingdom of God. For this too have I read in my Bible. Do *you* remember it, Ma'am."

"Upon my word, Mrs. Somers," said I, "you talked very well to this lady. And you might have put her in mind, that it was Jesus Christ himself, our blessed Lord and Saviour, who mentioned something of that sort to the Scribe in the Gospel, when he came to question him about his doctrines; and how we are told also, that Jesus loved the youth, who had faithfully kept all the commandments; and how he wished him to do one good work more; namely, to sell his property for the benefit of the poor. Could she have better authority for the excellence of the moral duties then the authority of Jesus Christ himself? He loved the young man, who performed those duties; he praised the Scribe, who reasoned well about them, and told him that he was not far from the kingdom of God; but, what is more, in his divine sermon on the mount, he preached every one of those very moral duties, and commanded men to observe them, and declared most awfully, that at the day

of judgment, he would not accept those who cried out, Lord, Lord, but those who did the will of his heavenly Father. You see, therefore, my good Mrs. Somers, that I should make a bad Minister of Christ's Gospel, and that I should preach very little like my great Master, if I did not preach, and enforce, with all my might, such morals as tend to make individuals, and families, and nations virtuous, prosperous, and happy. And it would be still worse for that man, who should venture to speak of those morals, as if they were to be despised, or undervalued. Remember what Christ says on that subject, and how he threatens those who break the least of God's commandments, and teach, or encourage other men to do the same. In short, the end of all Christ's preaching was to bring sinners to repentance, to make men holy, and thus to prepare them for heaven; and the end of all our preaching should be exactly what *his* was. This then being so plain, and the apostles also having acted according to this pattern, I cannot persuade myself, but that you must be mistaken here again with respect to the Lady's meaning; and I think it probable, that she only intended to tell you, that the best morals in the world, without faith in Christ, would be of no avail to any man; which is perfectly true; and that is the doctrine which I preach, and no doubt it is

the doctrine of every other Minister of the Established Church. It is your own doctrine, Mrs. Somers, is it not? You go to Church, and partake of God's ordinances; you are sober, and honest in all your dealings; you keep your tongue from evil speaking; you try to practise every duty belonging to your station; and yet you know very well, that your best services of this kind are but imperfect after all, and could never of themselves entitle you to the reward of heaven; and that your only dependence for the acceptance of such services, is upon God's grace through Jesus Christ. This *must* have been the Lady's meaning. Did she tell you how she knew that I did not preach the Gospel?" . . . .

"Yes, Sir," she replied; "I asked her that very question; and she said that she knew it by common fame, and because Dr. Warton's name was not printed in the list of the Gospel-Preachers; and some other outlandish word she used, which I could not understand." "Was it Evangelical?" I enquired. "Yes, Sir," she answered, "that was the very word. Pray what did she mean by *that*, Sir?" "Why really, Mrs. Somers," I said, "I can hardly tell you what this Lady might have meant by it; but I can easily explain to you the true meaning of the word. For instance, Evangelical doctrine properly means a doctrine consistent with, and de-

rived from, the Gospel; and an Evangelical Preacher is properly one, who preaches such a doctrine. I should hope, therefore, that all the Ministers of our Church were justly to be called Evangelical Preachers; but I must inform you, that there are certain persons who claim this title exclusively and entirely for themselves; and they call all the rest contemptuously Moral Preachers, as you heard the Lady call *me;* although she knew nothing of *me,* or of my doctrines, except by report."

"But pray, tell me, Sir," said she, "what do these persons preach, which they suppose to be more Gospel than what *you* preach? I should like to know it very much." "Perhaps," I replied, "I might readily guess what some of their subjects are, which they are constantly dwelling upon, and it will not be amiss just to mention them to you. Human nature, you know, was greatly corrupted by the fall of Adam, and in consequence we are all of us born into the world with an inclination towards evil; but those Evangelical persons are not satisfied with that way of stating the matter; they will have it, that human nature is utterly corrupt, and depraved; and that there is not a single particle of good about us; but that from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot we are none of us any thing else than one foul mass of wicked-

ness. This then is one of the subjects which they are always harping upon; and if any Clergyman should happen to say any thing in his discourses, which implied that he did not think quite so badly of human nature, they cry out immediately, that he is not an Evangelical Preacher; that he does not preach the Gospel; that he is one of your moral men. For my part, I do not see what is to be gained by saying, that human nature is quite corrupt, rather than very corrupt. Tell me, Mrs. Somers, if you know, as you do, that you are by nature very corrupt, and that nothing but the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, can free you from that corruption; does not that reflection always make you feel humble with respect to yourself, and grateful with respect to God?"

"To be sure it does, Sir," she answered; "and I have often heard you preach about it." "And, on the other hand," I enquired again, "if you fancied that you were quite corrupt; that is, a filthy mass of corruption, and utterly lost, and irrecoverably dead, as it were, in sin and wickedness, and not able to take a single step to get out of it, would not *that* throw you into despair?" "Yes, indeed, *that* it would," she said; "and I think I should be tempted to hang myself, or cut my own throat, as Mary Simpkins and Jane Bellamy did, when they were trou-

bled in their minds about their religion. Wasn't it this thought, Sir, of their desperate condition which drove them mad?"

"It is very likely," I answered; "but next comes their doctrine of grace, which is to rescue men from that wretched condition, as they say, without any endeavours on their own part; for they are not capable of making any; and indeed in spite of all their endeavours against it. Now I ask you, what will the sinner do, who has been taught this doctrine? Supposing himself unable to do any thing good, or to take any steps towards his salvation, will he not continue in sin, expecting this grace to come; and will he not excuse himself for his sins, whilst he continues in them, by saying that God's grace was not bestowed upon him?"

"To be sure he will, Sir," she replied; "and well he may." "In fact," I proceeded, "this is the very thing that I myself have heard said, by one of that class, who was given to stealing, upon being reproached with his bad habits; 'I wait,' was his plea, 'for God's grace to overcome them for me, for I can do nothing of myself.' Now *I* say, as *they* do, that we can do nothing of ourselves; and I ascribe every thing good, that we perform, or think, to the gracious influence of God's Holy Spirit; but I suppose this Spirit to work with us, and to help our

endeavours; not to make those endeavours unnecessary. Can you lift up this bed of your's?"

"No, Sir," she answered, "*that* I cannot." "Then," I continued, "with respect to the lifting up of this bed, we may very properly say, that you can do nothing of yourself; for nothing that *you* can do of yourself will be of any use. You are too weak; you want strength more than your own. Is not this so?" "Very true, Sir," she replied; "and if any kind neigbours should help me to lift it up, ought I not to thank them for it, and confess that I owed all to *them*? For without them, you know, Sir, it would never have been done." "You understand me exactly," I said; "and I conclude, from reason and Scripture, that it is the same with respect to grace. It is reasonable that it should be so, because otherwise we should be somewhat like these chairs and tables, or this poker. Can this poker attempt at all to stir the fire of itself?" I took the poker into my hand. "No, Sir," she answered, laughing. I asked again, "Can it refuse to stir the fire, when I move it for that purpose?" "No, Sir, nor that neither," she said. I enquired once more, "can it stir the fire in any other manner, or for any other length of time, than I wish?" "To be sure, it cannot, Sir," she replied. "Then," said I,

"according to this doctrine, of which I am speaking, there is no difference between a man, and this poker of your's. We are all mere instruments, or machines; and our reason and understanding are of no use to us whatever."

"So it seems, Sir, indeed," she answered; "but *that* cannot be." "No, truly," I said; "reason is one of the greatest blessings that God has bestowed upon us; by reason we are superior to the brute beasts, and even rise to the knowledge of God himself. It would be strange, therefore, if our reason were to be thrown away on any occasion, and more especially on the most important occasion of all, and we were to be reduced even below the brutes, to the rank of things without life; so that this doctrine, you see, will not hold with reason; and I will be bound to say that every page of Scripture is against it. In every page it is either implied, or we are actually told, that God's grace is to be sought by prayer, and by asking for it; that it works with us, when given, and helps our infirmities; that if we use it properly, it will be given to us in greater abundance; and that we must go through a course of preparation to make ourselves fit for it; and that moreover we may resist it, we may

do despite to it, we may quench it, we may drive it from us. Let me advise you, therefore, Mrs. Somers, whatever this Lady may say to the contrary, not to sit in idle expectation, and doing nothing; and supposing that some time or other God will do every thing for you; or if not, giving yourself up to despair; but read and study your Bible and Prayer-Book at home, as you do now; and go to Church to hear them read there, and join in all the sacred ordinances of God's religion, and walk in all his commandments blameless, like the holy people of old; and then, I warrant you, God will bless you, and will work in you, as St. Paul says, both to will, and to do, whatever is necessary for your salvation. For he loves, and has promised to help all, who with fear and trembling endeavour to work out their own salvation."

"I have been trying, Sir," said Mrs. Somers, "for a long time to do what you now counsel me to do; and I hope and trust that, by the aid of God's Spirit, and the merits of my blessed Saviour, I shall build upon a rock, and not upon the sand. The Lady has perplexed me with some things, and made me angry with other things; but, if possible, I shall go on day after day, doing more of what I ought to do, and forsaking more of what I ought not to do, that when it pleases God to call me, I may be the

better prepared to obey. And you know, Sir, he will reckon with us, as I told the Lady, for all the things done in our bodies, whether good or bad; and will judge us according to our works; so that if we go before him without any good works at all, without having any treasure laid up in heaven, what will become of us? He might pardon us for Christ's sake, and because of our hearty repentance at the close of life; so that we might escape the dreadful condemnation of hell-fire; but the rewards are to be over and above according to our good works, Sir, are they not?"

"Yes," I replied; "the Scriptures assert it again and again; and whenever they assert also that we shall be rewarded in consequence of our faith, it is very plain that they mean such a faith as is the same with, or always followed by good works; for faith without works is dead. The truth is this; our salvation from eternal death and punishment we owe entirely to Christ's dying for us, and suffering in our stead. *That* is the foundation. Next, it is by our faith in *him*, and in his death and merits, that we gain any interest in those merits, and make them applicable to ourselves. But, lastly, the positive rewards of everlasting happiness and glory, if our lot be in heaven, and the quantity of those rewards will be measured by our good works,

done in Christ's name, and for *his* sake. And observe, no other works, however well the world may think of them, will be properly good, or of any use to us; on the contrary, they will rather be accounted sins; because in the doing of them we did not look to Christ, but to some other object, or rule of our own invention. Nor again will any good works save us of themselves; salvation is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ; but, we being thus saved, those good works will follow us when we die, and will obtain for us a proportionate reward, or rather a reward abundant beyond all measure in proportion to the infinite bounty of God. Do you understand me, Mrs. Somers?"

"Not every word that you say, Sir," she replied; "but I understand the whole doctrine very well; and I tried to argue with the Lady about it, Sir, in my own way; and first I thought that she went all upon faith; but when I told her, that my faith, as I was confident, was very sound, and that I could repeat all the Articles of it in the Creed by heart, and I actually began to repeat them to her for her better satisfaction, with respect to the soundness of my faith, would you think it, Sir? she absolutely laughed in my face, and sneered at the profession of my belief, and said that such a faith as that would never save my soul. I confess, Sir, I was very much

hurt and shocked at this, and my anger too was roused, and I could not altogether controul my tongue, and I cried out, what, Ma'am? the *high creed*, which comes from the Apostles themselves, which the whole congregation stands up to repeat together; is this nothing? Is this to be despised?"

"Well," I said, "my good Mrs. Somers, and how did the Lady attempt to explain this conduct of her's, which appeared to *you* to be so full of impiety?" "Oh! Sir, not at all," she answered; "not at all to pacify me; and then came the business of the Bible, Sir, which made the matter worse; and so, Sir, away she bounced out of my house. And, whatever she might give me, I never wish to see her again. To talk slightingly, Sir, of the *high creed*, and of *my* Bible; was ever any thing like it heard before?"

Thus was Mrs. Somers running on with warmth, but I stopped her, that she might recover her breath, and also to enquire after other subjects, which I thought likely to have been mentioned in the discussion. The terms however themselves, which the Lady used in talking of these subjects, were not understood by this old woman; and she had not comprehended what was said, so far as to be able to give any account of it, right or wrong. She recollected the words, predestination, election, regenera-

tion, assurance, final perseverance, and many others, but she knew nothing further about them; and she hoped, she said, that the understanding of them was not necessary to her salvation. I ventured to assure her that it was not; and that no one would be judged at the last day merely by what they *knew*, but by what they *did*. "To know God, and to love and fear him," I said, "and to know also his Son Jesus Christ, whom God sent into the world to instruct and to save mankind, and to feel the want of such a Saviour, and to put your trust in him alone, and to ask *him* to give you his Holy Spirit, to make *you* holy too; and to do righteousness, and to love mercy; this knowledge, and this practice, is enough for all, and will save all; for it includes every thing essential to salvation."

"I always hoped so," she answered, "and thought so too, Sir; and I give you many thanks for your trouble in talking to me about these things. But you must go, Sir, to Mrs. Vinicomb, and Mrs. Milton, if you would hear more about the Lady. I suspect, indeed, that Mrs. Milton agrees with her pretty well; for I have often heard her talking in the same way, and using the same words, as the Lady did; and once, Sir, when we were admiring one of your discourses, she said it was not Gospel. But Mrs. Vinicomb, and all the rest of us think alike."

"Very well," I said, "then I will go to Mrs. Vinicomb immediately; and afterwards, when I am more fully informed, I will go to Mrs. Milton; so good morning to you, Mrs. Somers."

Mrs. Vinicomb was at her door. I followed her into her house, and accosted her at once; "So, Mrs. Vinicomb, you have had a Lady with you, who has been kind enough to examine you about your religion, to see whether you are in the right way to salvation or not. Why it is high time for you to know that, Mrs. Vinicomb; you are old, and grey-headed. But I should have thought, that you must have known it pretty well already, considering how regularly you go to Church, both on Sundays and on week-days, and how constantly you study your Bible and Prayer-Book at home."

"O yes, Sir," said Mrs. Vinicomb, "*that* is all very true. But the Lady says that it won't do. I must be regenerate, she says. *That* is the word, Sir, I am sure. She used it so often, I could not mistake. And sometimes she talked of a new birth, and of being born again; so I suppose all these words mean the same thing."

"I suppose so too," I replied. "The word 'regeneration,' is used twice in our English Scriptures; and both *that* word, and the word regenerate, are used in our Prayer-Book; so that you might have had some notion of their *proper*

meaning, before the Lady talked with you on such a subject. The expression of 'a new birth,' does not occur in any part of our Bible; but you may probably recollect it in the Catechism, and there the meaning of it is as plain as possible. And the expression of being 'born again,' is used, acording to our translation, twice in the conversation of Nicodemus with Jesus Christ, and very often in our Prayer-Book; and always in a manner sufficiently clear. In short, all these expressions, in their principal sense, mean simply baptism itself, or the great benefits of which we become partakers by baptism. What therefore could the Lady intend to say? Surely you have been baptized, Mrs. Vinicomb; have you not?"

"Oh! yes, Sir," she cried out eagerly; "my parents were good Christians, and had me baptized when I was quite an infant. If you doubt it, Sir, I will show you the certificate of it taken from the register; I have it here in this box."

She hastened towards the box, and began to unlock it, saying at the same time, "I have kept it here, Sir, very safe for many a long year; and I would not part with it for ever so much money."

By this time I had laid hold of her arm, and I desired her not to trouble herself to search after the certificate, "because," said I, "I have no

doubt whatever, but that you were properly baptised at the usual period. The thing which surprises me is, that you did not mention it to the Lady, and tell her, that, as you had been baptised, you must of course have undergone the new birth; that is, you must have been born again, or have become a regenerate person."

"Well, Sir," she answered, sadly disappointed that I would not permit her to hunt out the certificate, amidst a medley of things which the box contained, "I will shew the certificate however to the Lady, if she comes again, and convince her that I have been baptised; that I will." "You may do so," I said, "but I suspect she will not value it as you do; no, nor baptism itself. I shrewdly guess that she considers baptism, and regeneration, or the new birth, to be very different things. Did she pretend to be a Churchwoman?"

"Yes, yes, Sir," she replied; "the Lady reckoned herself a true Churchwoman, and was positive that we were all in the wrong." "Oh! very well," I said; "and did she tell you, when this new birth took place, and whether you would be sensible of it at the moment by your feelings?" "Yes, Sir," she answered; "the Lady told me, that the change was so sudden, and so great, when the new birth happened, that it would make itself known and felt, whether we

would or not; and that it might take place at any period of our lives; and, what is best of all, Sir, that having passed through it, we shall be full of wonderful comfort and delight, and be for ever after assured of our salvation."

"This is very fine indeed, Mrs. Vinicomb," I said, "if it be true. Give me your Prayer-Book; and let us look at the office for the ceremony of Baptism, that we may see what the opinion of our Church is upon this important matter of regeneration. And if the Lady were here, being herself a Churchwoman, she could not but abide by the Liturgy of the Church." "To be sure, Sir," answered Mrs. Vinicomb, whilst she put her Prayer-Book into my hands.

"Here then," I said, "at the very beginning of the service, I find this matter so stated, as to make it quite evident, that our Church supposes the infant to be regenerate, and born anew, by baptism. Why is the infant brought to be baptised? Because, says the service, none can enter into the kingdom of God, except they be regenerate, and born anew, of water, and of the Holy Ghost. And this is asserted on the authority of Jesus Christ himself, who positively laid down this doctrine in his conversation with Nicodemus."

"Oh! Sir," she said, "the Lady read all that to me out of her own little Bible, which she

always carries about with her; and then she told me, that by this history it was quite certain that I could not be saved, except I was born again of the Spirit." "That is very true," I replied; "but what does it mean to be born again of the Spirit? Jesus told Nicodemus, that he must be born again. Nicodemus wondered how that could be, understanding the expression in a carnal sense. Then Jesus immediately explains his meaning, namely, that he must be born of water and of the Spirit; that is, he must be baptised, and enter thereby into a new covenant with God; the very first benefit of which covenant is, the receiving of the Holy Ghost, and the washing away the stain of original sin. Do you comprehend what I mean by original sin?"

"Yes, Sir," she answered, "very well; you mean the sin which we inherit from Adam and Eve; which we have about us when we are born, and long before we have committed sin ourselves." "You are quite right," I said; "and it is from this that we are relieved by baptism. In our natural state, as we are born into the world, we are liable to the wrath of God on account of this original sin; but by baptism we are put into a new state with respect to God; a state of grace, or favour; and therefore it may very well be said, that we are born again. It is a birth indeed beyond all comparison more

valuable than our natural birth, because we enter by it at once into Christ's kingdom here, and may thus be trained up for Christ's kingdom in heaven, which is to come hereafter. Look again to the service. Here you see, in the very opening sentence, this calamity of original sin is stated as the primary reason for bringing the child to be baptised. Forasmuch, it says, as all men are conceived and born in sin; and then it goes on to what we mentioned before. In perfect agreement with this doctrine, St. Paul, in his Epistle to Titus, speaking of the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, evidently means baptism; of which the outward sign was washing with water, and the inward blessing which went with it was the gift of the Spirit. Only there is this difference to be observed: St. Paul baptised persons that were grown up to man's estate, when he converted such persons from Paganism to Christianity, and all those persons had added sins of their own to original sin. Whereas therefore infants are released by baptism from original sin only; for they are not guilty of actual sin; those persons were released from all sin, both original and actual, if they were baptized in sincerity and in faith.

"But let us proceed with the ministration of baptism in the Prayer-Book. In the first prayer

we beseech God to wash the child, and sanctify him with the Holy Ghost; and what is this but to signify, that we consider sanctification by the Holy Ghost to be the main part of baptism? And certainly to be sanctified by the Holy Ghost is precisely the same as to be born of the Spirit. "Again, in the second prayer, we call upon God on behalf of the infant, that *he* coming to God's holy baptism may receive remission of his sins by spiritual regeneration. Therefore our Church supposes spiritual regeneration to attend upon baptism, and we pray that it may produce the remission of sins.

Once more, in the third prayer, our Church directs us to ask of God, to give his Holy Spirit to the infant, that he may be born again, and be made an heir of everlasting salvation. Therefore it is presumed that the infant is born again of the Spirit at his baptism, by the great goodness and mercy of God.

"But now mark what the minister says immediately after the child has been baptised. Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate. Can any thing be plainer than this, my good Mrs. Vinicomb? Does not this shew us, beyond all possibility of denial, that our Church reckons baptism and regeneration the same thing, or that the latter is the necessary consequence of the former?" "Indeed it does,

Sir," she replied; "and I was very stupid, so many christenings as I have attended in my day, not to recollect this sentence; but I shall remember it in future, and if the Lady pays me another visit, I will give it her well. She frightened me sadly, Sir."

"We will see about *that* presently," I said, "whether you ought to be frightened or not with respect to your condition. But certainly none of those words need frighten you; for now you perceive that the Lady has perverted the sense of them, or has invented a new sense not known to our Church, and I think also not to be found in the Bible. In fact, the word regeneration is to be met with there only once more than I have already mentioned, namely, in the 19th chapter of St. Matthew, and the 28th verse. Look at *that* when you have leisure, and you will soon see that it is there used in a sense which has nothing to do with what we are now talking about.

"But we have not yet finished the service for baptism. In the last prayer we are ordered to yield our hearty thanks to our most merciful Father, because it hath pleased him to regenerate the infant with his Holy Spirit." When I read this, Mrs. Vinicomb lifted up her hands in astonishment, and wondered at the Lady, and wondered at herself; at herself for her ignorance,

or forgetfulness; at the Lady for so wilful a perversion of those words, as she thought it, and for alarming her, as she thought also, without any cause whatever. And she said moreover, "I shall be very glad to see her again, Sir, that I may tell her my mind. I am sure she can be no Churchwoman, as she pretended to be, but one of those rank Methodists, Sir, who go about preaching at Rector's Green, or elsewhere, with the rabble after them."

"Well, well," I said, "Mrs. Vinicomb, do not be angry with the Lady, or the Methodists; we shall perhaps know more by and bye; but before I go, I will point out to you the passage in the Catechism which I mentioned a little while ago, and which makes the new birth to take place at our Baptism. Here it is. The Catechism says, that in Baptism, besides the outward sign of water, there is an inward spiritual grace; namely, a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness. This is decisive as to the opinion of our Church. There cannot be a new birth unto righteousness without the gift of the Spirit. Therefore in Baptism we are born of the Spirit."

"Now then, my good Mrs. Vinicomb, as we have settled the proper meaning of those expressions, which the unknown Lady is so fond of; and as we find that they do not apply to *you* in your

present state; still you must be careful not to deceive yourself by supposing, that, because you were regenerate, and admitted into a new covenant with God at your Baptism, you will therefore be saved at the last day; or, because the Spirit was given to you at your Baptism, that therefore you want his help no more. If you supposed so, you would be terribly mistaken. It happens every day that covenants between man and man are not fulfilled; and a covenant between God and man may be broken; not by God; he will be sure to perform his part; but by man, who is almost as sure to fail. And with respect to the Spirit, you want his help every day of your life; you can do nothing of yourself without it; of yourself you cannot stand upright for a moment; and if you have broken your part of the covenant by a defect of faith in Christ, or by actual sin; then what is to become of you? What will you do for your salvation, unless the Spirit renew you? Here is the true fear; the fears which the Lady occasioned you about the meaning of words were idle fears. Now we come to the true state of the case. Are you daily renewed by the Holy Spirit of God? Look here at the Collect for Christmas-day. See what it is that you are taught to pray for; namely, that, being already regenerate and adopted into God's family of children, still you

may be daily renewed by his Holy Spirit. If the Lady only meant to tell you this; although I might find fault with her expressions, and for using words in a different sense from the proper one; yet I could not find fault with her doctrine. To be saved, you must daily repent, and daily be renewed. But then, if I understood you rightly, the Lady talked of the necessity of some sudden and violent operation of the Spirit, of which you could not but be sensible at the time; which you would be quite unable to resist; and after which you would be filled with comfort and joy, nor doubt any longer about your salvation. Was this so?"

"Yes, Sir," she replied; "and when I confessed that nothing of the sort had ever happened to *me*, she seemed to pity me exceedingly; and she told me, that, if I were not converted, I could not be saved. I have often read, Sir, in my Bible about people being converted; but I think she must have found out a new sense for this word too, as she applied it to *me*. For surely, Sir, I am not to be called a Heathen; having been born of Christian parents, in a Christian land; and having been baptized at the proper age; and being a constant church-goer; and taking the Sacrament, whenever it is administered."

"No, indeed," I said warmly, "such a term

can never be applied justly to you, for the reasons which you have yourself stated; and if it might be called conversion, when a very profligate sinner almost dead in sin and having little sense of it, and a downright slave to the devil, is roused out of his perilous slumber, and turns from Satan to God, and flies to that Saviour, whom he despised and blasphemed before; for so great a change may perhaps be called a conversion; yet what has *this* to do with *you*, my good old friend? It is true you are not entirely without sin. Who is? But you are endeavouring at least to walk humbly and blamelessly in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, and therefore you need no conversion. You need to be enlightened perhaps, and you need to be strengthened; that you may go on your way with more speed, with more courage, and with more certainty. Improvement might be advantageous to us all; but conversion is not wanted either by *me*, or by *you*, Mrs. Vinicomb."

"Thank you, thank you, Sir," she answered, "a thousand times, for setting my poor old heart at ease. I am not so perfect, Sir, certainly, as I ought to be at my age. I acknowledge myself a sinner. But I never do a wrong thing without being sorry for it afterwards; or without asking God to forgive me for Christ's sake, or without resolving by his help to be more care-

ful of my actions in future; and I think, Sir, that as I grow older, I grow more perfect, though still far behind, in my obedience to God's laws; and so, Sir, I have greater peace of mind, and better hopes with respect to my lot in the next world."

"Very well," I said; "then you want no other proof, that you are daily renewed by the Spirit. This is the method of his working; and by these fruits you may be just as sure of it, as you would be, if he sat upon your head in cloven tongues of fire. Never heed the Lady therefore. You need not the sudden and the violent, but only the gradual and gentle operations of the Holy Ghost, which you will probably never be able to distinguish from the workings of your own mind and conscience. But what matters it? You will know the Holy Spirit by your advancement in piety and virtue. Good day to you, Mrs. Vinicomb;" and so I took my leave.

My conversations with Mrs. Callender, Mrs. Somers, and Mrs. Vinicomb, having taken up as much time as I could conveniently spare, I determined to reserve Mrs. Milton for another day; especially as I had reason to think, that my conversation with *her* would not be a short one. But before I quitted the court, I stepped in to Mrs. Bonnett, who was the oldest of all the almswomen; being in her 95th year. I did not

suspect that the Lady had been there; or at least that she would have attempted to make so aged a convert. I went merely to see the poor old woman, who was now beginning to ail, though she preserved the faculties of her mind to a very great degree; and she might have wished me to pray with her. Of late she had not been able to get to church, being exceedingly lame. It had cost her indeed more than an hour with the help of crutches to go there; although the distance was considerably less than a quarter of a mile. Nevertheless she persevered in the attempt to perform this duty, until she was one day knocked down, and run over by a carriage; yet without any dangerous hurt; but her friends would not suffer her to stir from home any more. Whenever she had succeeded in reaching the church, with so much exertion, and so much danger, she did not think one service a sufficient purchase; so she remained in her pew, 'till the whole business of the day was over. If it had been possible, like Anna the Prophetess, she would not have departed from God's house, night or day.

I discovered this circumstance of her remaining in the church, between the services, by a mere accident, upon going one winter's day into the vestry, where I saw the good old creature, by the fire, dining upon some bread and cheese. The pew-openers had kindly placed her there

on account of the severity of the weather. This discovery of mine was to her advantage; for I took care ever afterwards, when she was at church, to send her a more comfortable dinner. Such was Mrs. Bonnett; not a fit subject for a discreet person to try to proselyte. But the rage for proselytism overleaps all the boundaries of propriety and decency; and even this poor old lady was not secured from it's attacks by her age or infirmities, but only by the steadiness of her principles, and the firmness of her character.

Upon entering I first saw Mrs. Bonnett's niece, an old woman herself, of the name of Ellis; and I said, "how does your Aunt do to-day, Mrs. Ellis?" "Here she is, Sir," was her answer, "sitting close by the fire. She has got a little cold, and for the last week has been very unked-like; and she has been talking two or three times of sending to ask you, Sir, to come and pray by her." "And why did you not send?" I said. "But it does not matter now; here I am."

A blanket suspended on a small clothes-horse, screened this aged almswoman from the wind, which poured in at the door. I went round, and came in front of her; and then I touched her hand, and sat down on a chair by her side. "I am sorry to hear from your niece," I said, "that

you are but poorly; but I am come to comfort you." "God bless you for it!" She replied. "I was wishing to see you, Sir; and it is very kind of you to visit me without being sent for. "Ah! Sir, you know how old I am; midway Sir, between ninety and one hundred years. What wonder, being so stricken in years, if I be feeble in body! But I am heart-whole, Sir, nevertheless. God has been very gracious to me; and for many, many years of my long life I have had nothing the matter with me, breath or limb. Indeed I am very lame, and weak, now; but it only troubles me, because I cannot serve him in his own house. Ah! Sir, I shall soon be gathered to the dust; and I thank him for giving me these warnings."

"I am glad," I said, "my good Mrs. Bonnett, to hear you speak in this manner; but I knew very well that you would; and I am sure that our Heavenly Father will approve of it. You have always been of a contented disposition; and so wise and pious as to see the hand of Providence in every thing."

"And hav'n't I had good reason, Sir, for contentment," she replied, "and for thankfulness too? When labour was necessary for my support, I was healthy, and strong, and cheerful; when I became too old to labour, I was placed here, where I want for nothing. If any thing

be lacking in this charity, I have kind friends, who make it up to me, and over and above; so that I can afford to have my niece here to help me in my infirmities; and she herself, poor creature, wants a sheltering-place. Could any body then be more blessed than I have been! For as to riches, Sir, I never coveted them; they might have puffed me up with pride, or made me a glutton and a wine-bibber. No, no, Sir, the only evil is, that I have not made the best use which I might have done, of the uncountable mercies of God; so as to be able to appear before him with the greater boldness. But his throne, Sir, as I have often heard you say, is a throne of grace; and I have a powerful Mediator sitting on his right hand, even his own Son, the God-Man, (you taught me that word, Sir,) to intercede for me with his Father, and to plead the all-sufficiency of what he did for me, whilst he was here in the flesh. I am humble, Sir, when I think of myself; I am without fear, when I think of *him*."

A pause ensued. She stopped in consequence of a little cough which troubled her; I was deeply affected, and lost in admiration of such sentiments, which were full of beauty and nobleness, and so strikingly pourtrayed the true, vital, practical, Christianity. What? thought I to myself, am I come here to comfort this

aged woman at the approach of death; or to teach her how to meet it? She has already the best comforter, and the best instructor, within her own bosom. She is a real Christian; and Christ, her great Master, whom she has so long and so faithfully served, has opened, and enlarged, and strengthened her mind, by his holy word, and by his Holy Spirit dwelling in her. I was conscious of my own inferiority; *my* religion in comparison with her's was mere empty speculation. A long resident in the almshouses without the necessity of labour, and a never-failing attendant upon her church, she had read and heard much; and God had blessed every thing to her soul's health; and such were the rich fruits that now bloomed forth when the tree itself was withered and decayed. A hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be formed in the ways of righteousness.

These and other similar reflections darted across my mind, whilst Mrs. Bonnett, assisted by her niece, was endeavouring to subdue the cough. She soom resumed her usual placid air; and it was now the proper time for *me* to speak. "Your confidence," I said, "my worthy old friend, is founded upon a rock; for it is founded upon Christ; and Christ is the rock of our salvation. But you have been wise also in never forgetting or neglecting that important

text of Scripture, which saith, Let *him* that nameth the name of Christ depart from all iniquity."

"Yes, Sir," she answered; "I have constantly had it in my eye; and I have tried to fulfil it; and I have had God's blessing upon my endeavours; so that I have certainly departed from much iniquity. I will not say all, Sir; that would be going too far, too far indeed; but I am a better Christian than I was in my earlier days; not because I cannot do now the sinful things, which I might have done then; but because I have been learning, step by step, and more and more continually, that to be holy as God is holy must be what God wishes with respect to *us*, and would make us all."

"Very true," I said, "for then, you know, we might be fit for heaven, before we go there; and might be able to see God himself face to face; which will cause us unspeakable joy and glory; and not only *that*, but what a happy world would this be too! And does not God, do you think, desire to see us happy here, as well as hereafter? His mercy in saving sinners is wonderful, and always to be praised and magnified by us; he saved the thief at the instant of his death on the cross; but if all men were to go on in open wickedness like the thief to the last moment of their lives, and then be

saved by some sudden unexpected act of God's good providence, their vicious habits being all changed and rooted out at once and in a single instant, surely this world would be nothing like what we should suppose that so wise and good a Being *must* have intended it to be; for the world would not be benefited by such changes as these."

Upon this Mrs. Ellis interposed, and said, "Aye, Sir, this brings it into my head to tell you, that there has been a strange Lady here with my aunt; and she talked a great deal about these sudden changes, and would have it, Sir, that nobody could be saved without them; and she tried to frighten my poor aunt, and to persuade her that her soul was in danger of being lost, because no such change that she knew of had happened to her." "And what did our good Mrs. Bonnett say to this?" I enquired. "Oh! Sir," she said, "my aunt told her that she had never read of such a doctrine in the Bible, nor heard any thing like it at church."

"Yes," resumed Mrs. Bonnett herself, "and I told her besides, that the old man was to be put off, and the new man put on; by which I meant the forsaking of sin, and the becoming righteous and holy; not all at once, but by the constant labour and diligence of our whole lives, assisted by the Holy Spirit." "Nothing could

be more just," I said, "than this account of the matter; and so it is that Scripture represents it; admonishing us to go on from strength to strength, and adding one virtue to another, till we come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. God forbid that we should assert that he cannot by his almighty power in the twinkling of an eye produce a sensible and total change in a wicked man's habits; and no doubt he has done it at various times for some great purposes of his providence. But this is not his usual way of working; and therefore we must not expect it to happen to ourselves, nor be alarmed if it do not; provided only that we are conscious of the sincerity of our repentance for past errors, and of our successful endeavours to grow daily in piety and virtue. For thus does the Spirit of God bear witness with our own spirit, that we are advancing in the divine favour, and towards the prize of our high calling, much more effectually, and in a manner much more to be depended upon, than by any of those sudden and violent emotions, which might be only mistaken after all for the operations of the Holy Ghost, whilst they are in fact nothing but the fits of a distempered fancy. But, pray, tell me, my good old friend, what did the Lady advise you to do, supposing you to be in so deplorable a condition?"

"Why, Sir," said Mrs. Bonnett, "the Lady lamented my case sadly, and said what a pity it was that I had not sat under a more awakening preacher; and that, if I were able to go, she would contrive it for me yet. Awakening, Sir, seemed an odd word; and I thought she meant that I always fell fast asleep at church; so I was a little angry, Sir, and told her that it was not *your* practice to let people sleep, whilst you were preaching: but to force them to keep wide awake. So she explained to me, that she meant no offence, but that she wished me to sit under a true Gospel-preacher."

Here Mrs. Ellis interposed again, and said, "Yes, Sir, and my poor aunt was still more disturbed at this, to be told that her Rector, whom she always listened to with so much pleasure and reverence, was not a preacher of the Gospel; and she taught the Lady much better than the Lady would have taught *her*. The Lady would have drawn her away from her church; but my aunt does not like any of the new-fangled methods of preaching." "No, no," resumed Mrs. Bonnett, "I was brought up in the Church, and in the Church I shall die, if God will. So I told her, Sir, that it was a bad thing to have itching ears; and to run about gaping after different preachers; and that it would be far better to go to her own parish-church, and to obey *them* that

were set over her in the Lord, without pretending to be wiser than *they* are, and to be able to find fault with their doctrines."

"Very well indeed, Mrs. Bonnett," I replied, "and you could not but be in the right, because the great Apostle, St. Paul, said the same." "Yes, Sir," interposed Mrs. Ellis; "and my aunt told her so; and away she went in a huff, because she could not contradict it." "She will not come again in a hurry," I said, "to instruct *you*, Mrs. Bonnett, in your religion. You are more able to instruct *her;* and if she arrives at maturer age, she will probably think as you do; and not go on in this manner, unstable in all the great principles, and ever learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth. But now I will kneel down and pray with you."

This being done, I rose, wished her good bye, and departed.

I was posting away with speed; but before I had got out of the court, Mrs. Holmes beckoned to me from her door to come across to her. Although in a hurry I obeyed her summons; and having followed her into the house, she carefully closed the door, as if she had a matter to communicate which was both important and demanded secrecy. "The Lady has been with me, Sir," she said in a whisper, and with a grave countenance; "but I told her at once, that I

had pinned my faith on *your* sleeve, and that it would be only wasting her breath to talk to me about religion."

"Did she know," I enquired, "that you were a Scotchwoman, and the daughter of a minister of the Kirk?" "No," she answered, "not at first; but in the course of our talk I had occasion to tell her." "And had she not great hopes of your agreeing with her in her opinions when she heard *that?* She would think that you were a Calvinist, which I suspect she is herself; and that you embraced all those strange notions about the Spirit, which the old Presbyterians did, and which I have nearly ascertained that *she* does now."

"It is very likely, Sir," she replied; "for she began to talk to me about Predestination, and assurance, and the in-dwellings of the Spirit, and such like; and when I thought to disappoint her at once, by letting her know, that I had long ago faithfully and sincerely conformed myself to the Church of England in consequence of your instructions, she said immediately that the Church of England was founded on the principles of Calvin, and in proof of it she opened my Prayer-book, and shewed me the 17th Article. Look, Sir, I have it here ready to ask you about it. You remember, Sir, I dare say, that though a Scotchwoman by birth, and

the daughter of a minister, I never was a Calvinist in my life, in the sense that you explained the word to me; but the Article seems to point out that very sense, and it puzzles me sadly."

"Well, well," I replied; "we will talk of this when I see you next; I am glad that you have mentioned your difficulty to me; but I have been detained longer than I expected, and I cannot stay now; so farewel for the present."

Thus at length I fairly escaped from the court; which indeed it was not easy to do at any time within a moderate period, when there were no such important matters to discuss. These old ladies had always a great deal to say, whenever I appeared amongst them. But upon this occasion they were full to overflowing; and I found upon further enquiry, that the unknown Lady had endeavoured to see every one of them. With some however she had not succeeded in this, on account of their superior activity and consequent frequency of absence from home. Two she had seen, but had abandoned in despair, as being too deaf, or stupid, or both, to flatter her with the least glimmerings of success. Another had absolutely frightened her away; having large goggling eyes, and a head that nodded like a Chinese Mandarin, and some gestures that betokened a little aberration of intellect. On the whole therefore there were but six, to whom

it was necessary to apply myself; and of these I had already despatched four. Mrs. Holmes was next in order.

SECTION II.

MRS. HOLMES AND MRS. MILTON.

She had left Scotland in her early youth, to visit, I think, some relations in England; and her father and mother dying soon after her separation from them without having made any provision for her support, she never returned thither. She once told me all the particulars of her history, but I have forgotten the greater part of them. However being reduced to much distress she married a person in an inferior station, with whom she removed from place to place, 'till at length they took up their abode in my parish, and kept some petty shop, and were always in very low circumstances. When I became acquainted with her, she was a widow of sixty-five years of age, with bad health, and in absolute distress; so that, as she had borne a good character during the whole of her residence here, I proposed to place her for the remainder of her days in the almshouses, to save her from the necessity of throwing herself upon the parish,

But I found that she was a staunch Presbyterian by profession, and had a sort of pride in adhering to "Presbyterian" principles, as she thought; whilst in fact she was quite ignorant what Presbyterian principles were; except so far as related to Church government, and the mode of administering the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. To frequent the parish-church, and to communicate according to our forms, were absolutely indispensable in an almswoman; and therefore she needed instruction and conviction before this desirable event could be accomplished.

In my first conversation with her, having this object in view, and trying to ascertain her opinions with precision, I enquired at once, if she were a Calvinist; to which question she replied without hesitation, that she was. But how great was my surprize, upon stating what Calvinism was, with the intention of afterwards refuting it, she seemed to be full of amazement and horror; and not only did she immediately disclaim such principles for herself, but doubted my veracity as to the principles themselves; and fancied indeed that I was endeavouring to impose upon her. Nor could I convince her of my fairness, until I shewed her a book of Bishop Tomline's; in which there were several original sentences from Calvin, with a literal

translation below. Upon this she yielded; and she used some strong expressions with respect to Calvin's doctrines, declaring them monstrous and even devilish; and that she could never bring herself to believe that such had been the doctrines of her own father, or of the Scotch Kirk.

This point then being happily got over, it only remained to reconcile her to our government by Bishops, and to our formularies of worship. In regard to the first, I stated the case in this manner. "Some persons perhaps will contend that we may adopt any form of church-government which may appear best suited to the times and circumstances of any country; others that we must establish every thing according to the model laid down by Christ and his Apostles; and this seems to be the safest and therefore the wisest opinion.

"According to the first opinion it would be impossible that any sort of uniformity should prevail, either in the whole Christian world, or in any particular country. There would be a constant changing every where; and some would like the changes, and some would not; and therefore would oppose and resist them; so that there would be perpetual quarrels amongst men, and wars and fighting instead of peace, and brotherly love, and unity.

"On the other hand, if men adhered to the model of Christ, and his Apostles, they would have in the very outset the wonderful comfort of knowing, that their government was of divine institution. For what Christ himself established carried with it as a matter of course divine authority; and the Apostles being under the guidance and direction of the Holy Ghost in every thing which they did for the settlement of the Church, their institutions also must be held to be divine. Building therefore upon this solid foundation, it was likely that the Church would be similarly governed throughout all nations and all ages, and would thus be at unity within herself, and withstand all the assaults of the wicked, devils or men, to the end of time.

"This way of reasoning must be allowed to be the justest and the best; and the only question would be, if a dispute should arise now, how to ascertain with sufficient certainty, what *was* the model of Christ and his Apostles. Now this may be done in two methods; either by finding out from history what actually took place in the earliest times; or by going to the fountain-head of the Scriptures themselves, and putting together all the short notices, that are scattered about here and there, with reference to the subject of government.

"If you follow the first method, then you must

allow the government by Bishops to be the proper one; for it may be traced to the very primitive ages of Christianity; and for 1500 years there was no other. All church-government of a different description from this is a modern invention, and therefore by probable argument not apostolical. For how could the government by Bishops have prevailed universally, as we know it did, from the very beginning, unless it had been instituted by the Apostles? It is not credible that the persons immediately succeeding the Apostles should have altered what the Apostles established; and consequently we cannot but conclude, that the Kirk, or any other Church not governed by Bishops, must give up the pretence of being founded upon the Apostolical model.

"However, following the other method of looking to the Scriptures themselves for information, the defenders of the Kirk will assert, that their forefathers made a discovery unknown for 1500 years; namely, that there was nothing in those Scriptures, which, rightly interpreted, could warrant a government by Bishops, and so, to overturn such a government, they deluged their country in blood. I do not scruple to say, Mrs. Holmes, that their conduct was both arrogant, and wicked; arrogant, to assume that the whole of Christendom had been

mistaken for 1500 years in supposing Episcopacy to be Apostolical; and wicked, to overthrow by fire and sword, instead of by argument and persuasion, what was by no means in its own nature, or of necessity, sinful. The reform of Episcopacy was all that was wanted; not the extirpation of it.

"But let us see, whether we cannot find something in the New Testament, to justify all antiquity.

"First then tell me, what *they* were called, who were immediately under Christ, our head?" "I suppose you mean the Apostles, Sir," she answered. "I do undoubtedly," I said. "And what were *they* called, out of the whole body of whom Christ selected the twelve Apostles?" "Disciples I think," was her reply. "And now tell me next," I said, "whether you recollect, that upon any occasion Christ selected another portion out of the whole body for some particular object?" "I do very well," she answered; "you must mean the seventy." "Certainly," I said; "and what do you think of these seventy? Were they of the same rank and order with the Apostles?" "No indeed," she replied; "there is no reason to suppose it." "Very well," I said; "then you have two orders in Christ's own time, and instituted by Christ himself. And does it matter, think you, by what

names they are distinguished from each other?" "No, Sir," she answered; "it does not seem to be of any importance."

"Well then," I said, "why may we not call those, who succeeded the Apostles, Bishops; and those, who succeeded the seventy, Priests or Presbyters? Do you see any harm in doing so?" "None, Sir, whatever;" she confessed at once. "Nor do I," I said; "and I am sure you remember the history of the first appointment of the Deacons as it is related in the book of the Acts." "To be sure, I do, Sir," was her answer. "Very well then," I said; "now we have got three orders of rulers in the Church; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. What would you have more?"

"Why, indeed, Sir," she replied; "this is very simple; and might be sufficient for persons, who have not been brought up in other opinions; but if you would not think me too curious, or too bold, I should like to hear something more about it from Scripture." "You shall then," I said. "For though I think it very probable, that the ancients did actually model their Church-government on this plain foundation, yet I confess, that, if more Scripture proof can be had, the conviction and satisfaction of men's minds at this day must needs be greater.

"The first thing then, which I remark, is

this; that the office, into which Matthias was chosen in the place of Judas, is called a Bishopric; which properly means the charge of overlooking others. But it might be thought, until the contrary can be shewn, that these others, over whom the charge was exercised, were only the great body of Christ's flock, and not persons invested with ministerial authority; and that all such persons might still be equal, and exercise the same powers of overseers. I turn therefore to St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy and Titus, whom we know to have been the first Bishops of Ephesus and Crete; it being probable, that something may be found there relating to a Bishop's power. In the very third verse of the first Epistle to Timothy, I meet with an expression, which appears to decide the question. For St. Paul says, that he besought Timothy to abide at Ephesus, 'that he might charge some to teach no other doctrine.' Therefore Timothy had clearly a power over other pastors, or ministers of the Gospel. Again, I observe in the first verse of the 5th chapter, this expression; 'rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father;' and in the 19th, 'against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.' Now these elders, at least those mentioned in the 19th verse, compared with the 17th, are the same as Presbyters, or

Priests, and ministers of the Gospel; and you see that Timothy had the power of calling them to an account, and of passing censures upon them. In the 22d verse St. Paul tells him to 'lay hands suddenly on no man;' which shews that he had the peculiar power of ordination which is exercised by the Bishops of the present day. In the Epistle to Titus St. Paul says, that he left Titus in Crete to 'set things in order, and to ordain Elders or Presbyters in every city, who might be able by the soundness of their doctrine to exhort and convince the gainsayers.' So Titus also had the power of ordination.

"I shall only mention one circumstance more; but that a very remarkable one. In the 20th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we find St. Paul exercising the very kind of power, which Bishops now exercise over their clergy. He summons the Presbyters of Ephesus to meet him at Myletus; and he delivers to them an episcopal charge, full of admonition and exhortation with regard to their momentous duties.

Upon the whole therefore, without looking any further, we see distinct traces in Scripture of the title, the office, and the power of a Bishop, which, as we learn from history, came immediately afterwards into universal use. In short there is no doubt but that James was Bishop of Jerusalem, Mark of Alexandria, and Clement

of Rome, in the life-time of the Apostles; and what more can be required to prove an institution to be Apostolical at this distant period I cannot conceive."

"I cannot pretend to contradict what you have said, Sir," she replied; "and I would not wish to be thought obstinate." "Obstinate people," I continued, "will hold out against any evidence whatever, and ingenious people will always find reasons for contradiction. So they might in the present case; but what is sufficient for *you* in this; that, if it do not matter, whether church-government be of divine institution, or not, then you have no reason to object to a government by Bishops; which so far from being sinful, is attended with great advantages, and is of the most undoubted antiquity; and, on the other hand, if you would prefer a government of divine institution, there is good reason for thinking, that Episcopacy is such, both because it began in the times of the Apostles, and because there are evident traces of it in the Scriptures themselves. Upon these principles therefore you may safely submit yourself to the Church of England, so far as this point goes."

"I will, Sir," she said, "faithfully and sincerely; for your explanations are very clear, and my conscience is satisfied. Besides, I know

very well, that I shall never have any opportunity of reading or talking with others, to unsettle me any more. If you are so kind as to put me into the Almshouses, there I shall be, and very contented too, for the rest of my life. And since there has been a talk about it, Sir, I have been studying your Prayer-Book; and I should be ashamed not to confess, that I think the services are most excellent in themselves, and such as any Christian person may join in to their great edification. I think too that it is better to provide such services, than to leave any thing to the discretion of the Minister. But with respect to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, I observe, that you receive the bread and wine kneeling at the altar; whereas the Scotch receive them, according to Christ's institution, sitting round a table, as if they were at a meal. Is not this better, Sir, as being like the first model?"

"It is not so like," I replied, "as you may at first imagine, my good Mrs. Holmes. It was not the custom in those days to sit at meals, and therefore this sacrament was not administered at the first to persons sitting. But, at all events, I hope you will not find fault with a mode of administering it, which makes it so much more solemn and awful. After what St. Paul said about the danger of receiving it unworthily, and of the necessity of making a most careful and

serious preparation for it, I think that nothing should be allowed, which might have any tendency in the least degree to cause the ceremony to appear to be a light or trivial matter; or, that, when we eat and drink, we eat and drink common food. No; to shew a due reverence for Christ's body and blood, what more proper thing can we do, than to receive them in the humblest posture upon our knees? The bread of life should not be received under common circumstances, but with every circumstance of godly fear."

She yielded at once to this explanation; and having been placed in the Almshouses, she has for many years been an unintermitting attendant at Church, and at the holy table. But the unknown Lady had now perplexed her understanding not a little; yet not so much as to shake her confidence in *me*.

The next day I went to her, and was welcomed heartily; the first thing which I heard was, that the Lady had not been there since my visit yesterday. In fact, she came amongst them no more. Mrs. Callender, who always listened to what she said with apparent due attention, whilst in the mean time she was laughing in her sleeve, had been to the Lady's house for something that was promised her, and had mentioned, with much exaggeration, the long talking which she

said I had had with some of the Almswomen; and that I seemed to be greatly surprised and displeased, that any other person should interfere with my duties. Whether this deterred her from interfering again, or whether, my vigilance being now aroused, she relinquished all hope of making a single convert, I do not know. I had been meditating upon the propriety of writing to her; but it was soon evident that writing was unnecessary, she herself having voluntarily ceased to endeavour to introduce those dangerous opinions, which I was bound by my ordination vow to endeavour to expel.

But to return to the subject immediately before me. "Mrs. Holmes," I said, "do you think that God's knowledge is of so vast an extent, that he knows every thing before it comes to pass? We call his knowledge infinite; but it could not be so, if it were limited to the past and the present. However, it is a most wonderful thing to be able to foreknow all circumstances apparently depending upon the merest accidents."

"It is indeed, Sir," she answered; "but without doubt God can do it." "You are right," I continued; "and now tell me, whether his foreknowing what you and I are about to do will be the cause of our doing what we do, whatever it may be." "I should think not,"

she replied. "Suppose," I said, "that you foreknew what Mrs. Milton, your next door neighbour, would do at one o'clock this very day; would *that* make her do it?" "No, indeed," she exclaimed; "I *do* know very well what she will be doing at that time; she will be at dinner; but my knowing it has nothing to do with *her* doing it?"

"Very well," I said, "then you can perfectly understand, that God may foreknow every thing with respect to all mankind, in all ages, and yet that men themselves may always act according to their own free will." "I do, Sir," she replied. "In short," I said, "it is their doing the things, which makes God foreknow them; it is not God's foreknowing which makes men do them."

Here she did not seem exactly to comprehend me, so I asked her, "if God could foreknow things which were never done?" "No, indeed," she answered; "there is no sense in that idea." "Then," I said, "if there were nothing done, there would be nothing foreknown; but whatever is done, is foreknown by such a being as God; and you see now, I suppose, that he foreknows it, because it will be done; but his foreknowledge does not cause it to be done." "I see it, Sir," she replied, "more clearly than I did." "Then," I said, "you will have less dif-

ficulty in future to reconcile the foreknowledge of God with the free will of man. But we will proceed a step further.

"If God did nothing more than foreknow every thing, and rested quietly in that foreknowledge, and suffered all men to do what they pleased during their whole lives, although he might reward and punish them in the next world according to their actions in this; yet this world could hardly be said to be under his government; could it." "No, Sir," she answered; "I do not see that it could." "Besides," I said, "our Bibles positively assert the fact, that he *does* govern all things by his providence, and therefore he not only foreknows, but in some way or other he acts also."

"He must indeed," she replied. "And suppose," I said, "that in considering beforehand what is likely to be for the good of his creatures, he should determine to bring to pass a certain event at a certain time; this would be going a great way beyond foreknowing, would it not?" "Certainly," she answered; "and pray, Sir, does not to predestinate mean this?" "Yes," I said; "*that* is the simple meaning of the word; namely, to determine in his own secret counsels, or to decree, or to appoint, if you will, at any time before, that he will accomplish something hereafter; like the call of the Gentiles, for ex-

ample. But we now commonly use the word in controversy since Calvin's time only with reference to the eternal salvation or perdition of individual men. You will perhaps understand all these words better, if I explain them one immediately after the other. Foreknowledge is the knowledge of every thing beforehand; providence is the same, with this addition, namely, a care and concern for every thing; and predestination embraces both, but is limited in its usual sense and application to mankind alone; and to *them* it is applied only so far as regards their everlasting condition, and the steps leading to it."

"Thank you, Sir," she exclaimed, "thank you a thousand times, for the trouble which you are taking to unravel my perplexities. I am ready now to go on." "Very well," I said, "attend then;" and my tone naturally rose above the tone of conversation.

"Our great Heavenly Father, from the foundations of the world, looking with his foreknowledge through the numerous ages which were to succeed each other to the end of time; he saw at one glance, the future being present to him, the actions and the hearts of all men; he beheld some, like Abraham, whose faith he deemed worthy of being imputed to them for righteousness; he beheld others, like Cornelius, whose

prayers and whose alms would come up for a memorial before him; others again, who like Zaccheus, in token of penitence, would make fourfold restitution for past extortions, and sacrifice half their riches to feed the poor; and others in the deepest sorrow and self-debasement, like the Magdalen, bedewing her Saviour's feet with her tears, and wiping them with her hair. At once his providence, which is over all his works, was especially interested on the behalf of those who, in the midst of crooked and perverse generations, would pursue the paths of rectitude, and walk in the great laws of reason and nature, and shine as lights in a benighted and ruined world; or on the behalf of sinners, no longer sinners, but with broken and contrite hearts humbling themselves before him, obeying their Redeemer's call to repentance, and imploring pardon in his name. Then comes the positive act of predestination; he decrees in his secret plans of wisdom and goodness; he determines immutably and irreversibly, that he will provide for all such persons, enduring faithfully to the end, a blissful and glorious haven of rest in the heavens; he appoints the train of causes, in his government of the world, by which their faith and their virtue, or the sincerity of their repentance may be tried and illustrated; he preordains, in short, that in their several ages they shall be

enrolled amongst the members of the Church of Christ; that the Holy Spirit shall assist their endeavours after godliness; that they shall be justified before him; that they shall be finally glorified.

"This is the doctrine of our 17th Article, and this is indeed a doctrine, my good Mrs. Holmes, which, whilst it is consistent with all the perfections of God, cannot but be wonderfully comfortable to every true Christian, under the vicissitudes and troubles of life. For, being conscious to themselves that they are growing in piety, and every Christian grace and virtue, they are assured that they are directed by the Holy Spirit; that the great work of their sanctification is going on; and that after they have suffered here with Christ, God's eternal purpose of saving all such Christians will be fulfilled in *them*, to their everlasting glory and happiness. What think you of this, Mrs. Holmes?"

"I think it very delightful, Sir," she answered; "and, what I did not expect. I think it very plain too; but why should they make such a clamour about this doctrine of predestination, Sir, or disagree about it in any way?" "Oh!" I said, "predestination is not explained by all persons as I now explain it to *you*. Calvin did not so explain it; and many follow the opinions of Calvin; and then they are forced to admit

all those terrible consequences, which you were so much shocked at some years ago; the sum of which is, that God determined originally, with respect to every individual human being, whom he would save and whom he would damn, before they were born, by an arbitrary decree, without any regard to men themselves, or their faith, or their actions and character, be they what they might."

"This is terrible indeed, Sir," she replied; "but is not all Scripture against it?" "I think so certainly," I said; "and I am sure, that if this doctrine were true, all Scripture would be useless; nay, what is worse, it would be a mockery both of God and man. Does not God say, over and over again, in different words, by the mouth of holy inspired prophets, that he wishes all men to be saved?" "Yes, Sir," she answered; "and I should like to know how the Lady would explain *that*."

"I will tell you," I said. "God does indeed wish all men to be saved, but he denies the means of salvation to all whom he has predestinated to everlasting destruction in hell."

She lifted up her hands in amazement, and shuddered at the impious notion, as she thought it; and cried out, "this is mocking with a vengeance, Sir! why, if a *man* were to act in this manner; to say one thing, and to intend the very

contrary; yea, to say one thing, whilst he knows that he has resolved to do the very contrary; should we not call him a base deceitful wretch? What ignorance and blindness, Sir, or what wickedness must this be, to make God liable to human failings?"

"Very true, Mrs. Holmes," I said; "I agree with you perfectly; and I ask you this also, Does not God promise in the Scriptures pardon and remission of sins to all sinners who believe and repent?" "Yes, Sir," she replied, "in almost every page; *that* is the very thing which I supposed the Gospel to mean; and glad tidings they were indeed, and a vast encouragement to sinners to fly to their Saviour and to reform their lives. But what are we to think of it now, Sir?"

"Oh!" I said, "this is another mockery. God makes this promise to sinners; but another promise of the necessary grace for the producing of faith and repentance, he makes to those only whom he chose in the beginning, by an arbitrary selection, and predestinated to eternal life." "Why, Sir," she answered, "this is downright quibbling and fraud. To make one promise in secret to overturn another made publicly! Can God do such things as these? God forbid, Sir!"

"So say I, Mrs. Holmes; and now," I continued, "you must see the use of that caution which

is placed at the end of the Article, that we should receive God's promises in such wise as they are generally set forth in holy Scripture. Undoubtedly we should so receive them; and therefore if God promise pardon to the penitent and believing, which he does again and again, I am fully confident that it is possible for all sinners to become penitent and believers; and, consequently, that no sentence of predestination to eternal punishment has gone out against any but those, with respect to whom, he foreknows that they will reject all the means of grace, which in the exercise of his providence he will offer them. Again, when God says that he would have all men to be saved, which cannot be denied; I am fully confident, that every thing will be done, consistently with infinite wisdom and justice, which might be sufficient to ensure that desirable event. But I do not expect that God should alter his eternal laws, or the whole course of his righteous proceedings, to bring about the salvation of incorrigible, impenitent, unbelieving sinners. God, without any impeachment of his sincerity, or of any of his great attributes, may say, that he wishes all men to be saved, although he may have determined from the beginning that he will punish everlastingly as many as reject his gracious invitations to faith and repentance."

"I can understand all this very well," said Mrs. Holmes; "and all that I now want to know, Sir, is, what pretence the Calvinists have for their strange method of explanation. I presume, Sir, they have something to say for it, good or bad, wise or foolish."

"Yes," I said. "They assert, that it would be a lessening of God's dominion and glory to suppose, that any event could possibly come to pass, without having been absolutely appointed by himself. Nor do we think that any event *can* take place against *his* supreme will, when he chooses to execute it; but we believe him voluntarily to have established a dominion of that sort, which leaves to men a certain measure of freedom, in consequence of which they are not like the brute beasts, but accountable for what they do to *him,* who gave them their various faculties, and placed them in a state of trial for the right or wrong exercise of those faculties. If God chose a dominion of this sort, and makes it his rule to govern mankind upon this system, then it is no lessening of his dominion and glory, to suppose that he does not govern by any other rule."

"Very true, Sir," she replied, "and I am sure this system is better than the other. But is this all, Sir?" "No," I said; "they cannot reconcile God's providence with the free will of man

at any rate; and therefore, to magnify God's providence, they destroy man's free will, and make all his actions necessary, so that he is no better than your spinning-wheel. We, on the contrary, allow to the fullest extent, that God, in his government of the world, controuls the actions of men; yet we maintain as decidedly the freedom of the human will. How these two things consist in all cases, we do not pretend to explain. How God controls mankind, without usually preventing them from acting freely, is one of the numberless mysteries that will be for ever hidden in the secrets of the Godhead."

"Yes, Sir," she answered; "we need not stumble at *this*, when there are so many things of which we know nothing, and of which we should be glad to be informed. Is there any thing more, Sir?"

"Yes," I said, "they quote Scripture; and therefore, if you like, I will explain to you all the passages of Scripture, wherein the words predestination and predestinated are used." "Oh! yes, Sir," she exclaimed, "I should like it of all things. But will it not give you a great deal of trouble?" "Not so much," I said, "as you may imagine; for the passages are very few. They occur only in the 8th chapter of St. Paul's

Epistle to the Romans, and in the 1st of his Epistle to the Ephesians."

She gave me her Bible, and I opened first to the fifth verse of the first Epistle to the Ephesians; and I read the verse itself; and then I said, "as *I* understand this passage, (and it seems sufficiently clear) nothing more is meant, than that God had determined in the beginning to make Christians of the Gentiles of Ephesus. They were predestinated, you see, unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ. Now they might have been appointed to this distinction, either, because there was a peculiar fitness about them for being amongst the earliest Gentile Christians; or, if you will, in an arbitrary manner; that is, the call of the Gentiles to Christianity must begin somewhere, and so God selected Ephesus, with other cities, first to hear the word and to embrace it. In the same manner, when it was necessary to select some one nation to preserve all the previous notices of Christianity, God selected the Jews. Let the selection have been as arbitrary as you please, in this sense; yet what of that?" Neither this case, nor the other, furnish any ground for the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. But the selection of the Jews does not seem to have been altogether arbitrary. The distinction of being the Father

of the Jewish nation was bestowed upon Abraham as a reward. This we are positively told in his history. Jacob was perhaps chosen in preference to Esau, in an arbitrary manner. But what has this to do with predestination to life eternal? Jacob was predestinated, or appointed, only to hold a certain temporal rank, which must have been held by somebody. This was all that was arbitrary. His eternal salvation rested on other foundations.

"Again, the rejection of the Jews was not arbitrary, but the just consequence of their monstrous sins. This we know from prophecy, and from the history which fulfilled it. God, no doubt, foreknew their wickedness, and in consequence appointed their merited doom; but at the same time he appointed that good should spring out of evil, and that their fall should be the rise of the Gentiles.

"But I am wandering from our texts. At the 11th verse we have the word again; and I am not quite certain to whom it applies. If to the Ephesians, then the sense of it is the same as before; if to the Jews, it means that God had determined from the beginning, not to reject the whole Jewish nation, but to admit a foreknown pious remnant of them to the privileges of the new covenant in Christ; if to St. Paul himself, it implies that he was preordained to be

a special Minister of the Gospel according to God's eternal plan; either, because God foreknew his fitness for such an office, and what force would be added to the Christian evidences by the conversion of such a man; or, in an arbitrary manner, which might very well be the case, without affording any ground for Calvinistic predestination.

"If God determine at a certain time to introduce a certain dispensation, he must have the proper instruments ready, must he not?" "To be sure he must," she replied. "Well then," I said, "if so, he must either raise them up at the moment, and endue them with the fit qualities, by an extraordinary act of his providence; or he must fix the precise time for his work, when such instruments will be in existence. In whatever way this was done with respect to St. Paul, his eternal salvation was not a necessary consequence; he was admitted to all the privileges of the Christian covenant, and became an eminent Preacher of the Gospel; but nevertheless it was possible for him, by an abuse of his great endowments, to have been a cast away, or reprobate, as the word is generally translated. What has all this therefore to do with Calvinism?" "Nothing whatever, Sir, that I can see," she answered. "Very well then," I said, "we will go now to the Epistle to the Romans.

"I read, for your further information, from the 28th verse of the 8th chapter, to the end. The word 'predestinate' occurs twice, you observe; namely, in the 29th and 30th verses. You see also, by the context, that the Church at Rome was in a state of deep affliction; it was assailed with persecution, with famine, and with the sword; it behoved St. Paul therefore to comfort the members of that Church in their distress; to confirm them in their faith; and to raise their thoughts triumphant over their sufferings, that they might endure stedfastly to the end. To effect this, he might have said to them, as he says in another passage, 'If ye suffer with Christ here, then may ye be confident of being glorified with him hereafter;' he might have said to them, as our Lord himself did to his followers, 'Blessed are ye, when men shall persecute you for *my* sake; rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.' And what he *did* say to them in this place was not very different. He puts them in mind, that all persons, to whom it hath pleased divine providence that the Gospel should be preached, and who have accepted and obeyed that Gospel, and persevere under every calamity with faith unshaken to love God, and to trust in him, shall hereafter, by his eternal appointment, be formed after the image of his Son Jesus Christ, become the children of the

resurrection, and rise with spiritual and incorruptible bodies like his, to the life eternal in the heavens; shall, in short, be justified, glorified, and acquitted at Christ's tribunal, and crowned with the glorious crown of immortality.

"This is the simple meaning of the passage; and to derive that comfort from it, which it is calculated to give, the Romans had to consider whether they were in the circumstances pointed out by the Apostle; for the declaration is a general one, and applies to all who are in such circumstances. No doubt then that the Gospel had been preached at Rome by an especial providence, and in execution of a plan fixed from the beginning; for the Lord stood by Paul, when he was in prison at Jerusalem, and told him, 'that he must bear witness to him at Rome.' So it was also in the case of other cities. On one occasion particularly, when Paul, if left to himself, would have gone into Bithynia, he was directed by a vision to go into Macedonia. Without question it was for the furtherance of the Gospel that the Macedonians and the Romans were selected to hear it before other nations to whom the Apostle might have preached it; and this perhaps was the cause of the selection in the divine counsels. But to the people themselves it was an act of free grace; and they might justly consider themselves as called ac-

cording to God's eternal purpose, which was an earnest of the fulfilment of every promise dependent upon that high calling; so that if they abided in his love, holding fast their faith to the end, they would then be entitled to all the unspeakable privileges of the new covenant; sanctification, justification, glorification. Need I say more, Mrs. Holmes?"

"No, Sir," she answered; "I understand your explanation, and I am satisfied with it; and I see nothing here of the predestination of Calvin, which made me shudder so much when I first heard of it." "It is very true," I said; "it is not to be found here. Set yourself at ease. The only predestination that you need think of, is, that God has immutably determined to save all sincere Christians; and, if *you* are a sincere Christian, and feel within yourself those evidences of it, which our Article points out, namely, the mortification of your earthly members, and the drawing up of your mind to high and heavenly things; then are you most assuredly amongst the predestinate to life. Good morning to you! I must now go to Mrs. Milton."

The door was close to that of Mrs. Holmes. I knocked, and was desired to come in. Mrs. Milton was infirm, and rose from her chair with some difficulty to do me honour. When I had

helped to reseat her, and had enquired after her health, I said, "Mrs. Milton, you have seen this strange Lady, of whom I have heard so much; have you not?"

"Yes, Sir," she answered, "I have seen her twice, and I hope to see her again very often. She is a nice Lady, Sir, indeed; and, what is more, she is a pious woman, and a serious Christian, Sir." "Piety towards God, and seriousness in our Christian profession, are much to be commended," I said. "Had you a great deal of talk with her?" "Yes, Sir," she replied, "a great deal." "Oh! very well," I said; "I am glad to hear it; because I think you will be able to give me an exact account of her opinions. Some of your neighbours here could not understand her; and so, I suppose, they have made wild work of her speeches to them. At least they have told me very extraordinary things."

"Ah! poor illiterate creatures," she exclaimed, with a scornful countenance; "they know nothing, Sir. And how should they? They have had no education; their God is their belly, Sir; and they are in the gall of bitterness!" "Oh! Mrs. Milton," I said; "I think much better of them than you seem to do; and I am sure, that some of them are far advanced in practical religion, which is the main point, for aged persons

especially. But we will have done with this. I want to know how your acquaintance with the Lady began."

"I will tell you, Sir," she answered. "It looked rather odd at first. She knocked at my door, Sir, as you did a few minutes ago; and when I called out to her to come in, she opened the door, and just shewed her face, and enquired if any body was living there that knew Christ. To be sure I was a little startled at such a question, and thought it very strange; so I answered cautiously, I hope so, Madam; but after a while I bid her come in and take a chair."

"So then," I said, "you entered immediately into conversation with her, I suppose." "Yes, Sir," she replied; "I was so bold as to ask her name, and where she lived; upon which she told me where she lived, but she did not mention her name; observing that we should find it out in time, as she was come to stay in the Parish for some months, and intended to be often at the Alms-houses, and would be very glad to be useful to us all, if she could." "Well," I said, "you thanked her, no doubt, for her kindness." "I did, Sir," she answered; "and then she went on to tell me that she had the spiritual welfare of her fallen wretched fellow-creatures most at heart; and that she felt a strong call within her to go amongst them, and see whether they were sit-

ting in darkness, or whether the marvellous light of the Gospel were shining around them; and that with such a view she had come here first. And so, Sir, I thought this was a very charitable work to the souls of men; and I told her, that I hoped God would bless her endeavours."

"But were you not," I asked, "somewhat too hasty, my good Mrs. Milton?" "How so, Sir?" she enquired eagerly. "Why," I said, "you did not know yet what her sentiments might be, and what she meant by darkness and light; and then the odd way in which she came to you, and her talking of a call, were very suspicious circumstances, and should have made you pause before you bid her God speed. Besides, you must be aware, that the spiritual affairs of this Parish have been committed to *me* by the law of the land, and the institutions of our Church; and therefore you should have asked her, whether she had my concurrence in what she was about to undertake. Another thing also you should have recollected, that St. Paul in his Epistles is very strong and decisive against the meddling of women in these matters. It seems that they began to meddle very early, even to such a degree as many silly women pretending a call do now; that is, to speak in the Church itself, in the presence of the congregation; but St. Paul said, 'let your women keep silence in the

Churches;' and again, with more vehemence, 'it is a shame for women to speak in the Church.' Women were to be learners only, as the Apostle thought, and not teachers; and therefore he says in another place, 'let the women learn in silence with all subjection; but I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man; but to be in silence. And if they would learn any thing,' he says again, 'let them ask their husbands at home;' it being their duty to be always under obedience. You see then the judgment of St. Paul upon this matter; and you must remember, that he gave these admonitions before countries were parcelled out into Parishes, and Ministers appointed by the laying on of hands to take care of them; but at a time when a wide field was open, without limit or restriction, for the labours of the husbandmen; and when the Spirit was bestowed in an extraordinary manner; and when labourers were actually called by that Spirit to gather in the harvest; that is, to convert the Heathens to Christianity. What would he have said now, then, if he had lived in this age, and had been told of a woman going about and entering into the private houses of Christian families, and perplexing the understandings of the ignorant with difficult questions, and unsettling the faith of the most aged, in which they have been brought up, and lived for so many

years, and setting them against their Ministers? Would he not have said, that it was overstepping all the bounds of decency, and the surest way to destroy all that order and peace, which he was so anxious to establish in every Church?"

Mrs. Milton was confounded by the earnestness of my tone, and by this long string of objections to the Lady's conduct; but she was secretly prepossessed in her favour, and would have gladly defended her if she could. In fact, before she became an Alms-woman by my appointment, she had been a professed Methodist herself, and had belonged to a Calvinistic branch of them; and I suspected, although she was one of the most regular attendants at Church and Sacrament, that she had never renounced any of their opinions. Much of their phraseology she tenaciously retained, and it brought her into a readier and closer contact with the strange Lady. With all the learning, however, which she had acquired in her former occupation of a school-mistress, upon which she prided herself so highly, and from the lofty towers of which she looked down with contempt upon the other Alms-women, as an inferior race; like the Pharisee of old upon the poorer Jews; with all this learning and self-conceit she had no correct understanding of her own phrases, but only used them instinctively, or by habit; and seemed, I

thought, to attribute a sort of saving character to the mere use of them. With texts of Scripture she was well furnished; but she had no power of putting them side by side, and of extracting from the comparison one consistent doctrine. Of the authority of the Church, and of the ordering of her Ministers, and of the succession of them in direct descent from the Apostles, she knew nothing; and therefore, in her younger days, when her strength enabled her, she ran after every self-constituted preacher, who pretended a call by the Spirit; considering *that* to be the best ground of authority over others. Yet she assumed to herself the privilege of judging all, under whom she sat, whether moved by the Spirit or not; and her censures were always barbed with a peculiar malignity. In truth, she was reckoned to be a very ill-tempered woman; and, whether she tried to cure her ill-temper or not, I cannot say; but certainly she never succeeded to her dying day. If you talked to her about good works, she said they were all filthy rags. It was her favourite phrase, and continually in her mouth; yet in her heart she was completely Pharisaical; and often indeed she openly extolled herself and her good works, and triumphed in comparing them with the failings of her neighbours. In her own opinion, in short, she was a chosen vessel, and sanctified unto sal-

vation; she was already sealed by the divine decree, and could not be lost, come what may. Others were reprobates.

Such was Mrs. Milton, without overcharging the portrait. I had myself been completely deceived in her. She had written to me one of the most pathetic letters imaginable, in consequence of which I became acquainted with her; and in due time, observing her uncommon regularity at Church, I placed her amongst the Almswomen. From the period of this event her character declined rapidly in my estimation. She took to drinking spirits, as was reported; to *me* she was very ungrateful; and with all her colleagues she was involved in perpetual quarrels. She had not a friend amongst them; and she incited *them* to break their friendship with each other. At length she became bed-ridden, and quarrelling as a matter of course with every person whom I sent to her assistance; and none of her own family coming near her, she was of necessity moved into the poor-house, where she lingered for some years in a helpless condition, still hating, and hated by all, but still assured of her own salvation.

However, at the time of the Lady's visits, we were not apparently upon very bad terms. I had been under the necessity of rebuking her now and then; chiefly for quarrelling. Her next-

door neighbour, Mrs. Holmes, she had a particular spite against; and there were two things which she always cast in her teeth; one, that she belonged to the Scotch nation, who had basely betrayed and sold their king, the martyr, Charles the First; the other, that there had been a subscription for her, or gathering, as she called it, to enable her to take possession of her apartments; whereas, she, Mrs. Milton, had abundance of furniture of her own, and had entered independently. I mention this circumstance to shew the spirit of the woman. Still I had hopes of her; and I foresaw that my conversation with her, in respect to the unknown Lady, would supply me with an admirable opportunity of combating her opinions, and of endeavouring, as I fervently wished, to amend her heart and principles. I sought the conversation therefore with the greater eagerness.

Her reply to my charge against the Lady was, that the other ignorant old women must have misunderstood her; but that perhaps she would have done better, if she had left them to their incurable blindness and nakedness. "But who will find fault with her zeal, Sir?" she said. "She pitied their seemingly lost state, and her spirit was stirred within her to try to rescue them from it; and the Spirit of God bore witness with her own spirit, that the attempt should be

made. Was it for *her*, Sir, to resist the Holy Ghost?"

"Two things," I answered, "are here assumed, Mrs. Milton. How did it appear to her that *they* were in a lost state; and that *she* herself was under the extraordinary influence of the Holy Ghost?" "Why, Sir," she said, "this elect Lady felt the Spirit sensibly dwelling and working within her; and the old women informed her that nothing of the sort had ever happened to themselves. Therefore, you know, Sir, they are yet in a lost state; dead and buried; and nothing but the extraordinary workings of the Spirit, producing a new birth, can raise them out of it."

"Here is another difficulty started," I said. "You call the Lady elect, I should think, in some peculiar signification; but we will talk of that presently. I want now to understand better how the Lady was assured of the sensible indwelling and working of the Spirit." "Oh! Sir," she replied, with rather an air of pity; "it is very easy to be distinguished by those who have it. He makes himself known, Sir. I feel him now myself *here*, Sir," she exclaimed with prodigious energy and enthusiasm, rising from her chair, and striking her breast.

Mrs. Milton having stood up for an instant, and having repeated the same assertion, sat down again. She shook all over, like an aspen-

leaf. She had never expressed herself to me so openly and decidedly before; I was glad that she had now done it voluntarily; and I was determined, if possible, to compel her to explore the matter carefully to the very bottom. I said, therefore, "Mrs. Milton, I am struck with a sort of reverential awe, when I hear you speak in that manner. What you suppose to have been vouchsafed to you from heaven, if it come indeed from thence, is something very wonderful, if not miraculous, and must have important consequences in view."

"No doubt, Sir," she answered, "it is the sweet and pleasant token of my adoption in Christ. That is the important consequence to *me*. But it is not so wonderful, Sir, or uncommon; at least all who are saved must experience it, as I do." "Very well," I said; "then it is the more necessary that we should make no mistake about it. For the Spirit working within us, if not merely our own imagination, might be a bad Spirit, or a good Spirit; and, if a bad Spirit, then he may urge us to do such things that after death we may lift up our eyes in hell, being in torments, instead of opening them upon the bliss and glory of heaven."

"I see no danger, Sir," she replied, "of any mistake; at least in my own case." "I do not know," I said, "what danger there may be in

your case, Mrs. Milton; but I am quite sure, that, in general, there must be very great danger. You cannot have forgotten that text of Scripture, which tells us, 'that the devil goeth about continually, seeking whom he may devour;' and I cannot conceive a more likely method, by which he might deceive us to our destruction, than by transforming himself into an angel of light, and filling our fancy with a notion that we are all along directed by the Spirit of God. Besides, you, who are so well read in the Scriptures, know perfectly, that they warn us not to believe every Spirit; but to try the Spirits, whether they be of God. It is quite clear, therefore, that there must be false spirits; and also, for our comfort, that there is a way of discerning between the false and the true. You are acquainted with history too, Mrs. Milton, and therefore you know the fact, that the greatest enormities have been committed by men, who believed that they were acting under the influence of God's Spirit, whereas it was their own heated imagination, which hurried them on to mischief; or very likely the devil himself; for they did his works. You remember those Scriptures, Mrs. Milton, and the horrible histories of the Antinomians, and more especially the wicked times of Charles the First; do you not?"

"I do, Sir," she answered; flattered by this

appeal to her knowledge, and therefore the more disposed to admit my doctrine; "but I hope you do not think, Sir, that I could be deceived in that manner." "No," I said, "Mrs. Milton; I do not think that you could be so far deceived, as to be guilty of *their* crimes; but you might perhaps be led on, almost without perceiving it, to entertain opinions detrimental to your salvation, and to neglect duties of the utmost importance to it. I will help you, therefore, if you please, to try this spirit, by which you suppose yourself to be moved."

"Very well, Sir," she replied, rather contemptuously; "you may examine me as much as you think proper." "I do it only for your own good," I said; "so tell me, if you can, more precisely what it is that you feel; or what it is that you are urged by the feeling to think and do." She was silent for a moment, and then collecting her whole mind, and knitting her brow, and fixing her glaring eyes upon me, and protruding her lips, with the air of one about to pour forth an oracular response, at length she burst out in the following words: "I feel as if I were all soul, and could escape the body, and leave it behind! I feel as if I could take wings, and soar aloft into Paradise, to hear unspeakable words, and to see my blessed Redeemer, face to face! I feel; I am assured, that I am a vessel

made to honour; one of those for whom alone Christ died; one of those, who are called according to God's eternal purpose; and predestinated to everlasting life."

Here she stopped, but her fervour still animated her countenance, and spoke in her eye. I waited till it had somewhat subsided, and then I said, "I must freely confess, Mrs. Milton, that I think much of what you have told me very doubtful matter; and I should have been a great deal better pleased to have found that your feelings urged you on to something practical; namely, to add to your faith, virtue; and to knowledge, temperance; and to brotherly-kindness, charity. St. John, after bidding us try the spirit, to ascertain his true character, gives us this admirable test: 'He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we, that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.' By these Scriptures, Mrs. Milton, I form my judgment; and I hoped that you would have told me, that your whole heart and spirit, like the Spirit of God, breathed love and charity towards all mankind, and especially towards your kindred and neighbours; that you were labouring to root out

of your bosom every particle of envy, malice, and animosity, and to cultivate meekness, forbearance, forgiveness, the loveliest of the Christian graces and virtues, and the most opposite to the spirit of the world; and that, with all the flame of heavenly desires, you were aspiring after heavenly purity and holiness; purifying yourself, day by day, as Christ is pure; becoming holy, day by day, as God is holy. If these had been your tendencies, I would have acknowledged at once the certain influence of the Spirit of God; but, instead of these, I see nothing but the confirmation of dangerous opinions in religion; or very vague, and wandering, and useless speculations; such, in short, as I might have expected to meet with in a person of crazed intellect, (which is not your case, Mrs. Milton;) and nothing like the blessed effects of the inward workings of the Holy Ghost."

She could bear me no longer. I had observed indeed, for some moments, that she curbed her temper with the utmost difficulty; and I expected a storm whenever I should cease. "What!" she exclaimed, interrupting me, "does not our Article say, that the Spirit draws up the mind to high and heavenly things? And are not those the things which now swell my thoughts, and raise me, as it were, to heaven itself?"

"No, indeed, Mrs. Milton," I said, seizing the moment when she paused from agitation, and want of breath; "no, these are not exactly what the Article means; but, if they were, you must recollect, that the Article couples another thing with them, which should go with them hand in hand, and without which, in fact, no man will ever be fit for heaven." "And what is *that*, Sir?" she enquired impatiently. "It is the mortification of the works of the flesh, and of our earthly members," I answered; "it is the purging away of our old sins, and the being fruitful in all those graces, and virtues, which I mentioned before; of which St. Peter says, 'that he who lacketh them is blind, and cannot see afar off; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.' Knowing, therefore, as I do, Mrs. Milton, that you are unhappily very deficient in many of these excellent virtues, especially in that essential Christian grace of charity, without which even faith itself will avail nothing; I must tell you candidly, that so far from thinking you under the extraordinary influence of God's Spirit, I tremble for your condition."

Here I saw that she was ready to burst with rage; but still conscience-struck, as I thought, (for what I had said was undeniable, and must

have pierced to the quick;) she bridled her tongue, although an unruly member, and persevered in a restless silence. So I continued: "I do not mention your faults, Mrs. Milton, solely to give you pain; but with the same view that St. Paul reproved the Corinthians; to bring you to a godly sorrow, and to a due Christian humility. Humility indeed becomes us all; but it becomes those especially who have yet so much to acquire of holiness and charity. In fact you have begun at the wrong end. You have worked yourself up, by dwelling perpetually in your thoughts on the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, which I do not scruple to call an impious doctrine,—you have worked yourself up to the vain imagination, that you are sealed for heaven by an eternal decree, and that nothing can defeat it; the consequence of which is, that your notions of yourself are ridiculously exalted; that you despise all your neighbours who are not supposed to be gifted with the same grand privilege; and that you neglect the narrow and difficult road, along which the rest of us are toiling towards the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus. If this wrong method of proceeding be not abandoned, it will lead to a most dangerous downfal. When your heated imagination cools, and you examine yourself with a severe impartiality, and discover that you

are naked of those virtues without which no man shall see the Lord, without which heaven would be no heaven to any man, and therefore unattainable; when you find this, then perhaps you will be tempted to rush into the other extreme, to reckon yourself amongst the reprobates, and I shudder to mention it, like your poor friends, Mrs. Bellamy and Mrs. Simpkins, to plunge into the bottomless depths of despair, and to lay violent hands upon yourself. No, no! The only safe method of proceeding for us all is this; to strive to be perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect, and as Christ commanded us; conforming daily more and more to the beautiful pattern which he himself set us; denying all ungodliness, and every irregular appetite; walking religiously in the paths of justice, mercy, humility; and zealous of every good work. If we proceed in this manner, and are conscious within ourselves that we are advancing progressively in our love towards God and man; then may we cheer the labours and the perils of our Christian warfare with the delightful reflection, that we are in truth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and embraced within the divine decree, which predestinates to eternal life all the faithful and obedient followers of Jesus Christ. This would be to begin at the right end, and would infalliby conduct us to heaven.

Be calm, my good Mrs. Milton; be calm, I entreat you. Our souls are at stake upon this question; let us argue it coolly and dispassionately, which is the only way to arrive at truth. Were I not anxious for your present and future welfare, I would leave you to yourself; but, you see, I do not leave you; be as kind to yourself as I would be to you."

Here I paused. My antagonist had been in a high fever of irritation during the greater part of the time that I was speaking; but the conclusion soothed her. It appeared to me to be absolutely necessary to lay bare her failings, and yet to induce her to prolong the conversation; which was an affair of no small nicety. Once or twice I thought that all was lost, when I had ventured to strike hard and home; and I doubted whether I had adopted the wisest mode of endeavouring to convince her of her errors; but a little well-timed expression of concern for her everlasting good restored a certain degree of amicable feeling, and prevented her from breaking up the conversation in wrath.

On the present occasion she replied in a pathetic tone, "O that Christ would snatch me out of this howling wilderness!" "Yes indeed," I interposed immediately; "to be with Christ would be far better; but if he were to call you *now*, what time or opportunity would

you have to amend those failings?" "Ah! Sir," she answered; "I feel myself like the poor scape-goat; all the sins of all these slanderous old women are heaped up on my head, and I am forced to bear them all. But I must make bold to say, Sir, that I do not approve your doctrine; because in my mind it is not the Gospel. Your's, Sir, is a doctrine of works; but salvation is a free gift, and belongs only to those, for whom God has prepared it before the foundations of the world were laid. Every thing is known unto God from the beginning; and he says by the mouth of St. Paul, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. His own supreme will, which cannot be changed by man, has decided every thing; and thus alone could he fully manifest his power and glory. We are all in his hands, like clay in the hands of the potter; he moulds us as he will; some to honour, some to dishonour."

She would have run on, but I exclaimed, "Stop, Mrs. Milton, stop for a moment, if you will be so kind, I beg of you. I have a word to say to those passages of Scripture which you have quoted, and the sense of which, I think, you have entirely mistaken." "How so, Sir?" she enquired, with a little impatience; "I

should like to know what other sense you can put upon them, which is more plain and reasonable."

"Attend then," I said, "patiently; and you shall hear. I will give you the true sense, as I think, and as the learned think; a sense much more plain, and much more reasonable than your's. You are aware, I suppose, that St. Paul takes this passage about the Potter from the 18th chapter of the Prophet Jeremiah; and without doubt he uses it in the same sense that the Prophet did. Should you suppose he would use it differently?" She allowed that it was not probable. "Very well then," I said, "give me your Bible, that I may read the whole passage to you, text and context. Oh! yonder it is. Sit you still; I will reach it in a moment."

Having found the Bible, and having opened the chapter in question, I read the first ten verses; and then I asked her, whether the Prophet was commissioned, or not, to threaten destruction to the Jews, if they persisted in their evil ways? "To be sure he was," she answered. I asked again, whether it was the destruction of the Jews, as a nation, that was intended, or the eternal destruction of individuals, body and soul, in hell? She would have contested this point with me; but I read her again the four verses from the 7th, and she was compelled, how-

ever reluctant, to confess, that the destruction intended was national; the withdrawing of God's peculiar favour from the people, the loss of their high privileges, the ruin of their magnificent temple and city, their captivities and final dispersion, and the trampling of them down by the Gentiles.

This being at length conceded, I asked thirdly, whether it were not a difficult matter to convince the Jews of the possibility of their fall from that proud condition which they had hitherto enjoyed of being the elect people of God, the keepers of his sacred oracles, and the ancestors according to the flesh of the great Prince that was then to come? She granted it. "How very apt then, how very striking and forcible," I said, "was this similitude of the Potter and the clay! The Potter fashions upon the wheels a vessel of clay; in a moment he mars it; he dashes it to pieces in his anger, as the Psalmist says, or he obliterates the form which he has made, because it does not correspond to the fair idea in his own mind; but in a second moment another vessel rises under his moulding hand, as his judgment or will directs him. Such then was the kingdom of Israel in the hand of God. As it had been planted, and built up, by his sovereign will alone; so might it be pulled down, plucked up from the

foundations, and destroyed by the same irresistible will. But observe, it is the first act only; the election of the Jews from the mass of nations for a particular object, it is *that* only which is irrespective, if it be indeed irrespective; (you know the meaning of the word) their rejection was not to be so. In that God would no longer act like the Potter simply according to his supreme will, but by the law of his moral attributes. If they returned from their evil ways, they might still preserve his love. Now mark the sequel. The Jews increased in sin, and might well be called vessels fitted for destruction; but God was long-suffering towards them, and forbore to dash their state to pieces, until his grand eternal purpose of admitting the Gentiles into the Gospel-covenant was ripe for accomplishment. Then when they had themselves rejected that Gospel, and crowned their other wicked deeds by the crucifixion of the Lord of life and glory, God at length cast them off, and rooted them out of their once favoured and glorious land, and scattered them far and wide amongst the nations of the earth, a spectacle and a proverb of reproach to this day. What have the Jews to object? God chose them at the first irrespectively, if you please, of his own free grace, to hold a distinguished rank in the

world; why may he not, as irrespectively, if he will, depose them from that rank, when the great purpose of his moral government of mankind is answered? Other nations have been raised up to glory, and pulled down again; and we can give no account of it, but God's supreme will. Why not the Jews in the same manner? But God did not deal so with *them*. We know the contrary from what God himself said, and from what our blessed Lord said when he wept over Jerusalem. In God's conduct to the Jews, in short, he submits every thing to the bar of our reason; and we acknowledge the hand of justice alone in their punishment. This is the whole argument both of the Prophet and of the Apostle. In what part of it do you see the least shadow of the doctrine of the predestination of individuals to life, or death? Be candid, my good Mrs. Milton, be candid; and yield to the force of truth."

She bit her lips with vexation; but having nothing to answer directly to the point, in order to gain time, as it might seem, she said, "Yes, Sir, but this about the clay and the potter is not all; I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; how would you try to explain *that* away, Sir? What can *that* mean, but God's supreme will, without any regard to men them-

selves, whether they be better or worse than others, as you might think them?"

"Be patient, my good Mrs. Milton," I said, "and I will explain every thing to you in due time; but I cannot explain every thing at once. And before I explain this text it will not be amiss to caution you against one great danger into which persons of your description are too apt to fall. St. Peter found it necessary to give the same caution even in those early times. For it seems, that as soon as St. Paul's Epistles were published, people began immediately to wrest them to their own destruction. And, no doubt, one way of doing so was this; they took a single sentence by itself, like that text of your's, and explained it by itself; not considering what went before, or after; nor whether the sense, which they thus put upon it, agreed with the rest of Scripture, or not. So in your case; if the sense of this text be what you suppose, all the rest of the Bible would be overturned; for all the rest of the Bible goes upon this idea, that God is a rewarder of those, who diligently seek him; and that he is no respecter of persons; but that he accepts all men, who fear him, and work righteousness, whoever they may be, or of whatever nation. And this agrees so much better with our notions of infinite justice, wisdom, and goodness, that we might naturally be

led at once to think that any sentence appearing to contradict it, must be capable of being satisfactorily explained, when compared with the context and other parts of the Bible.

"However, for a moment I will take your text quite by itself, as you have done; and yet, even then, the very last idea that would have come into my mind would have been your's; that God determined from the beginning, whom he would save, and whom he would damn, everlastingly, without caring what they were. I should have reasoned in this manner; this text applies to individuals, or to nations; if to individuals, then it may mean that God sends them irrespectively health or sickness, riches or poverty, or what not? He makes them kings or beggars, masters or servants, philosophers or ideots. I say, irrespectively; but I myself believe no such thing. I believe, that God deals out even these temporal worldly advantages and disadvantages upon the wisest and best reasons. But very often we can give no account of it; and in general God himself will not vouchsafe to give us any account of it; and so we come to say, that they are dealt out irrespectively. But let it be so. The idea, that God makes us thus individually what he pleases in this world, like the Potter creating out of the same lump of clay whatever forms he will according

to his own fancy or caprice, is not so terrible to us, and does not so monstrously shock our native feelings of right and wrong, as the other idea, that he plays and sports, as it were, with the precious immortal souls of his creatures, and irrespectively ordains them by his eternal fiat to endless happiness or misery. Besides, those temporal worldly circumstances are of the less consequence, because they have nothing to do directly with our eternal condition. The effect of them is as men may use them, and they are good and evil only in this view. The beggar may be saved as well as the king; and perhaps the better for being a beggar; nay, certainly so, if I conceive aright of the dispensations of Providence. And I feel confident that my conceptions of God are honourable to him, whilst your's are apparently the very reverse.

"Pray tell me; if you should see a man endued with uncommon strength, employing that strength, in order to shew it, in knocking down indiscriminately all whom he might chance to meet in the streets, or in succouring the aged and the weak, who were heavily laden, and carrying their burdens for them; which would you call the more glorious application of his strength?"

"The latter," she said. "And why?" I enquired again. "Is it not because the latter is

directed by wisdom and mercy; and the former is a mere random and mischievous exertion of strength?" She could not deny it. "Well then," I said, "you have no scruple in supposing, that God acts thus indiscriminately by his Providence, even with respect to the everlasting state of men's souls, and in maintaining that it would be an impeachment of his power and glory to presume to say that he acted otherwise; whereas you would immediately cry shame against any human being who should dare to act in the same manner even in trifling things. No, no, Mrs. Milton; God's true glory arises from the wise, and the just, and the merciful use of his infinite power. Such power in the hands of a man is a horrible thought. Why? Because you cannot depend upon the rectitude of a man. But in the hands of God it creates no alarm; because his other perfections are infinite."

Here she interrupted me, and said, "Yes, Sir; but his ways are not as our ways; nor his thoughts as our thoughts." "That sentiment," I replied, "is very true, and very pious, when rightly understood; but it has nothing whatever to do with the present question between us. Many of his ways, no doubt, will always be unsearchable, and past finding out by such limited beings as we are; and many, although known,

we shall never understand with our present faculties. Creation and Redemption, for instance, are unfathomable mysteries, and so unlike to any ways of our's, that they appear almost contradictory to our reason. And the things which seem great and little to our thoughts are not so to an infinite Being. Great and little, and space and time, are all swallowed up in God's immensity. But where his moral attributes are concerned, we are not altogether at a loss how to judge correctly; they are the same in kind both in *him* and in *us*; but he exercises them in their full perfection and lustre; whilst in *us* they are corrupted and dimmed by human frailties and affections. You must remember the 18th chapter of the Prophet Ezekiel; it is well worthy of your study, and sufficient of itself to extinguish all idea of God's acting irrespectively, at least in the punishment of men even in this world; but what I mention it for now is this; that God actually invites us there to judge of his proceedings in the moral government of mankind. 'O Israel,' he exclaims by the Prophet's mouth, 'are not *my* ways equal? Are not *your* ways unequal?' But if justice and other moral attributes were a different thing in God from what they are in *us*, except in degree, it would be vain and idle to invite us to consider the divine dealings with us; for we should

have no foundation to stand upon. Let us go back then to the point at which you stopped me.

"We were speaking of God's having mercy on whom he will; and considering the text by itself, we applied it to individuals; now we will apply it to nations; but as applied to nations, which cannot be saved or damned collectively, it can only regard their temporal condition; whether they shall be ruling nations, or subject-nations; learned, or ignorant; enjoying great advantages, or disadvantages, as we might call them. And in point of fact we can give very little account of the selection of some nations to be more distinguished than others in power, or glory, or wealth, or learning, or liberty, or moral and religious knowledge; but suppose the selection were quite irrespective, what has this to do with the salvation of individuals? Nothing whatever; no, not even in the singular case of the Jews. God vouchsafed to them great religious and moral advantages above all the nations of the old world; and certainly, for no merit of their own, but with other important views, as I have already explained. Individuals however under this national covenant might have made extraordinary advances in piety and virtue, and their faith might have been reckoned to them for righteousness; but their salvation,

if they were so blessed, was no necessary effect of the covenant under which they lived; it was owing to the retrospective merits of Christ. Neither were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob necessarily saved, because they were chosen to be the Fathers of the Jewish people; nor were Ishmael and Esau necessarily condemned, because Isaac and Jacob were preferred before them. Abraham entreated God for Ishmael, and Esau besought his father Isaac with tears, to obtain the pre-eminent patriarchal distinction; but, in these temporal matters, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; every thing must be referred to God's secret purposes in the government of his rational creatures; and God does not make men kings, or glorious, or rich, because they themselves desire it. Nor is there any just ground of complaint for those who are passed by; because, with respect to their eternal condition, the rule of judgment will be according to that which they have, not according to that which they have not.

"Now then, Mrs. Milton, I have bestowed great pains to shew you, how we ought to reason upon that text, if it were taken by itself, as you have taken it; and you perceive, that it is quite absurd to jump from it to such a conclusion as you have done. But, after all, the true way of getting to the sense of any passage is, to

compare it with the context, and the whole of Scripture; and I have said already, that *your* interpretation is at variance with all the rest of the Bible; and, if we look to the place in the book of Exodus, where the text was originally spoken by God himself to Moses, we see immediately, that it was spoken of nations, and more particularly and immediately of the Jewish nation; so that it can have nothing whatever to do with salvation, or damnation, in the next world. Look here; I will read it to you; it is in the 33d chapter; and a wonderfully fine chapter it is. Now look to the 9th of the Romans; and you will perceive at once, how St. Paul applies this text to the Jews of his own age; reminding them too, that it was what God said to Moses. In short, it evidently means, that God, if he chose to do so, might admit the Gentiles into covenant with him, in the place of the rejected Jews, by an act of his supreme will, in the same manner as he had before been gracious and merciful to the Jews, at a time when they did not deserve such especial favour; and who should say him nay? The rebellious Jews themselves were the last people in the world to dare to murmur at such a dispensation."

In going through the context, and explaining it according to the view just taken of it, I came to the 18th verse, where it is said, that God

hardeneth whom he will. She had forgotten this text before, and now she caught at it with a sort of voracious appetite, and cried out; "Aye, aye, Sir; what is this, I pray you? Can any thing be plainer or more positive than this? This will defy all perversion or cavilling."

Her triumph was short; but I was sorry to observe, by the use of these expressions, that, in spite of my explanations, she still obstinately clung to her own opinions, as if her salvation depended upon them; and that probably she bore malice against me in her heart for controverting them. However, I thought it best to leave nothing unanswered; and time and reflection, I hoped, might have a good effect hereafter. But first I said, "God forbid, Mrs. Milton, that I should cavil upon such an awful subject as life and death eternal, or endeavour to pervert the texts of Scripture from their true meaning! And I am sure that you have no sufficient reason for making such a charge against me. I have proceeded with you in the fairest and most candid manner; I have listened to all your objections; and I have replied to every thing, as long as you had any thing to say. You have now advanced a new text; I will reply to *that*, as I did to the others; namely, by explaining it; which will shew that it is not connected with what you imagine.

"First then, taking the expression, 'whom he will, he hardeneth,' in it's simple sense; why should we go back to the beginning of things, and say, upon the authority of this text, that God predetermined from all eternity to harden whom he will? Is it not quite sufficient to say that he determines to harden whomever he does harden on each particular occasion when the occasion may call for it? What need of an eternal decree to account for God's conduct, or to explain this text? However, in the second place, it is spoken, you see, of Pharaoh, and alludes to the astonishing obstinacy and obduracy of his resistance to God's declared will; and we might well suppose, that the Spirit of God would strive no longer against so great a degree of disobedience and infidelity. This Spirit then being withdrawn, and the wicked King abandoned to his own blind and furious passions, his heart is of course completely hardened against every motive of piety or virtue to which it was naturally a stranger. We know from Scripture that there is a certain point beyond which God will interfere no more; Pharaoh passed this point, and then God left him to himself to do what he liked. So that, you perceive, there needed no positive act on the part of God to harden him, but only to strive no longer against his wickedness; and this I presume is

God's usual method in the government of individuals. But suppose, if you please, that in the case of Pharaoh, he went beyond this; that not only his Spirit ceased to strive with that wicked monarch, but also that such motives were forcibly suggested to him by the cessation of the plagues, although primarily an act of Divine goodness, as drove him headlong down the precipice, on which he stood; what then? This I call a judicial proceeding on the part of God; he has passed sentence against the man on account of his wickedness, and now he inflicts punishment immediately in the present world. But in explaining the matter in this way we must be careful not to make God the direct author of sin; which would be a monstrous impiety and blasphemy. What I myself think therefore is this; that God providentially so disposed the course of events, in the separation of the Jews from the rest of mankind, that they were nursed up in Egypt, till they became a numerous people, under mild and gentle kings, who protected and cherished them; and were now to be brought out, for their own instruction, and God's glory, with a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm, under a king, who, by his cruelties, should make them eager to depart, and, by his ferocious unsteady character, should give occasion for the display of all those miraculous deeds

which bore witness to the presence of the great Jehovah himself amongst them. This interpretation brings honour to God, and is therefore likely to be the true one; for under this view we contemplate him as a Being who foreknows all things, and who by his Providence extracts a mighty good out of the evil passions of men. But whether this be all; or whether he go farther, and withdraw his Spirit from the wicked whom he has sufficiently tried; or farther still, and actually punish them with a judicial blindness, in consequence of which they plunge deeper into sin; under any of these views of his government we need no eternal decrees to harden men before they are born; and still less can we admit such decrees to settle the doom of men for ever in hell. God is present everywhere at every moment, and he acts perpetually by his Providence. He is not like the maker of that clock of your's, who formed a machine, with various parts, arranged in a certain order, to go on moving, and performing it's office, as long as it could; and who, when he had finished it, and sent it out of his hands, troubled himself no more about it; God made the world, and his eye is still ever upon it, watching the dispositions and works of his creatures; and his ears are still ever open to hear the prayers and praises which they send up to him; and his hand is still

ever employed in showering down benefits or inflicting punishments; which benefits, and which punishments, are both alike mercies, to bring men to heaven. For why will ye die? he saith. I have no pleasure in the death of *him* that dieth; saith the Lord God. This, I think, is a beautiful and a noble picture of the Deity; but your system of predestination, Mrs. Milton, and eternal decrees, (O horrible thought!) makes God the direct author of all the sin and wickedness with which the world is overflowed, and is therefore to be rejected for ever with a just and a deep abomination."

Thus I concluded the explanation of her text. How she was affected I could only conjecture by the uneasiness of her gestures, and the displeasure of her looks. She bore with me however to the end; and then, having stored up in her mind that I had attributed foreknowledge to God, she asked me, whether I could account for such a perfection in a better way, than by the fact of God having ordained every thing, and therefore foreknowing it; or, at all events, if God certainly foreknew every thing, whether the actions of men did not in consequence become certain also, and therefore inevitable; so that all free will and choice on the part of man was thereby lost. This was the substance and mean-

ing of what she said, which she expressed in her own way, it matters not how; and in my answer I repeated to her the same explanations which I had used to Mrs. Holmes; but I also endeavoured besides to clear up the difficulty in the following manner.

Looking through the window I saw one of the old women at the pump, which stood in the centre of the court-yard; and I asked Mrs. Milton who it was. "It is Mrs. Callender," she answered. "And what is she doing?" I asked again. "She is filling her tea-kettle," she said. "Are you quite sure of it?" I asked once more. "Yes, Sir," she replied with surprise at my question; "I cannot possibly be mistaken; I am perfectly certain about it." "Very well then," I said; "here is a circumstance which you know certainly and infallibly; does your certain and infallible knowledge of the thing make Mrs. Callender do it?"

"No, to be sure," she answered; "it cannot." "And yet," I said, "if she did not certainly do the thing, you could not certainly know it." "Very true," she replied. "Do you understand then," I enquired, "that it is her doing the thing which makes you infallibly know it, and not your infallible knowledge of it which forces her to do it?" "I do understand it," she

said; "and I think I understand also what you are driving at. But knowledge and foreknowledge, Sir, are very different things."

"Be patient, Mrs. Milton," I said, interrupting her; "be patient, and we shall come to that in a moment. Look again, and tell me what Mrs. Callender is doing now." "She is going back to her house, Sir," she answered, "with her tea-kettle full of water." "And do you know," I enquired, "what she will do when she comes there?" "Yes," she replied; "*that* I do very well. It will be her tea-time in half an hour; and so she will put her kettle on the fire immediately." "Here then, Mrs. Milton," I said, "is a circumstance which you foreknow; but you will hardly tell me, I should think, that good Mrs. Callender does not put her kettle on the fire of her own free will, and quite uninfluenced by *you*."

She was staggered at first; but soon collecting herself she answered; "I was too hasty, Sir, in saying that I knew very well what Mrs. Callender was going to do. It is likely indeed that she will put her kettle on the fire; but she may set it down, and do something else first; or, for what I know, Sir, she may drop down dead, as soon as she crosses the threshold."

"She may, undoubtedly," I said; "and this glorious sun, which now shines in so brightly

through your window, may rise no more; but you have the greatest human certainty, that the sun will rise to-morrow, without your foreknowledge, however certain, causing it to do so; thus in the case of Mrs. Callender your foreknowing to the greatest certainty, humanly speaking, that she will put her kettle down on the floor, or on the fire, will have no effect whatever in causing her to do the one or the other. She does not think about your foreknowing what she is going to do; she thinks only of what is most convenient to herself, and exercises her judgment and free will, whether she shall put the kettle on the fire at once, or wait a few minutes; so that your foreknowledge, if it were absolutely certain, would make no difference with respect to Mrs. Callender; the difference is only to yourself; she would act precisely the same, whether you were humanly or absolutely certain. If you were like God, you would be absolutely certain, and would have the most perfect foreknowledge; but Mrs. Callender would do exactly what she intended to do, uninfluenced by your foreknowledge, which is entirely confined to yourself, and has nothing to do with *her*. This then is the state of the case with respect to the divine foreknowledge; but when we come to talk of God's Providence, then the difficulty begins; for Providence supposes act-

ing also as well as knowing; and you might think that he could not act upon us without destroying our free will. However, we are assured from Scripture that the Providence of God and the free will of man are perfectly consistent, whether we can explain the consistency or not. But in truth we *can* explain it in numberless instances, although not in all. Consider: For what purposes does the Providence of God interfere with the actions of men at all? It seems worthy of his nature that he should interfere for the restraint of the wicked. We will take that case only; but it will be the pattern of many more, when you reflect upon the subject at your leisure. Has he not then all the mighty elements of nature at his command, which he can use, as he pleases, to thwart the sinful designs of men, without putting any force upon their own free will?

"Suppose some Pirates sailing prosperously before the wind with the fixed intention of plundering a defenceless city. On a sudden, when their prey is almost within their grasp, a furious storm arises, and blows them off many a league awry from their object. The deed, which they meditated, is unperformed; but their will was free, and remains so under all the circumstances. Their will, by which God will try them, was to perform the deed; but God, without changing

their will, made the deed impossible. What is to prevent him therefore from reckoning with them in perfect justice? If he had influenced their will, they would not have been accountable to him.

"But to take a real fact. When that wicked ambitious warrior, of whom you have heard so much; Buonaparte I mean; thought to have subdued under his yoke all the cold kingdoms of the North; God opened his great treasure-houses of frost and snow; and who could abide it? The vast attempt of the man was cut short; but his will was untouched; and he therefore continued to be responsible for the whole action to the Divine Judge. This, and what I said before about Pharaoh and the Jews, will be a sort of clew to guide you through many difficulties; and as to the rest, we leave it to God himself. Without doubt we are here in a state of trial, and are accountable beings; which could not be the case, if we were not free to act. Our actions would be the actions of *him*, who ordained them; our sins would be *his*; and if this be not blasphemy, when spoken of God, I know not what is blasphemy."

Mrs. Milton was as averse from yielding as ever; but she was reduced to silence against her inclination, and seemed to have nothing more to say. So I turned over in my thoughts what

she had thrown out incidentally, and to which no answer had yet been given; and I now brought it forward, fearing lest it might occur to her again, when I was gone, and confirm her in her opinions, by appearing unanswerable. After a short pause, therefore, I continued thus:

"I have not forgotten, Mrs. Milton, that, amongst other things, you called the strange Lady, the elect Lady." "I did, Sir," she answered; "I thought her so *then*, and, if you will excuse me, I think her so still." "Oh!" I said, "I will excuse you readily; I wish you to state your opinions openly, and to produce all your arguments; I will answer them, and you may afterwards reflect upon the whole subject by yourself, and pray to God to enlighten your understanding, that you may know the truth.

"Do you use the word 'elect' in the same sense that St. John uses it?" "I do," she replied. "Very well then," I said; "look here in your Bible, here is a case exactly to the point. He begins his second Epistle in these words, 'the elder unto the elect Lady.' Nothing can possibly be more apt for our purpose. You will suppose that this Lady was predestinated to eternal life, and consequently that she cannot fail of it. Let us examine the Epistle, and see whether it be written on this idea. No, it is not. It runs upon the idea that she might possibly

fall from the faith. Indeed the 8th verse shews that she was in danger of falling; for, you perceive, it says, 'look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought.' So then the Apostle's labour in her conversion might be all in vain."

Mrs. Milton was not a little disturbed at this interpretation; and she enquired, rather angrily, what the word could mean, if not chosen to salvation from all eternity. "It means no more," I said, "than that this Lady had been called to the knowledge of the Gospel, and admitted into the Christian covenant." "At that rate then," she exclaimed, "all Christians might have had the same title. Is not that so, I ask you, Sir?" "Undoubtedly," I replied; "all Christians, and more especially the early Christians, might have had this same title; and, what is more, they all had it. See here St. Peter; he writes to the strangers scattered throughout divers countries, and he calls them all 'elect.' Again, in the salutation at the end he says, 'the Church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you.' Now, you may remember, I mentioned before St. Peter's famous text, that men must be diligent to make their calling and election sure. It is plain, therefore, that St. Peter had a very different idea of the word 'elect,' from that which you have; and it does not stand to reason that

all those persons to whom St. Peter wrote should actually be saved. For then it would not be true to say, 'many are called, but few are chosen;' we ought to say, all who are called are chosen also; and the Christian net, cast into the sea, does not gather up the good and the bad together, as Christ tells us, but the good alone. The use of the word is the same with St. Paul; he addresses all his converts as the 'elect;' but it appears that many of them were guilty of crimes which might lead to their damnation. Why, even Judas Iscariot himself was one of the elect; but you will allow, I presume, that he fell from the privileges of his election. No, no; it means nothing of what you suppose, but only the great and enviable distinction of being first called to Christianity; that is its proper sense; and it is a title, therefore, which in that sense applies no longer to any Christian person in a Christian country, although it may be so used. When a single family, like that of the elect Lady, seated perhaps in the midst of an idolatrous city or nation, was converted to Christianity, and became a part of the visible church; or, when the same thing happened to many families before the conversion of the whole city or nation to which those families belonged, the title of elect was applied to them with a peculiar propriety, and was an honourable distinction;

but when the conversion became general, distinctions were done away, and the title itself, I believe, fell gradually almost into disuse.

"Look here at the 11th chapter of St. Paul to the Romans. It is remarkable that in this one and the same chapter he calls both the Jews who rejected and the Jews who received the Gospel by the self-same title of the election. Would it not be ridiculous then to assert that election had any thing to do with an eternal decree appointing men irrespectively to salvation? The Jewish people are called the election, because they were distinguished from the rest of mankind by being admitted to the privileges of the Mosaic covenant; and the Christian Jews are called the election, because they were distinguished from the rest of the Jews by being admitted to the Gospel-covenant; and again, to distinguish one election from the other, these latter are called the election of grace.

"It must be observed, however, that, as God foreknows all things, he of course foreknows who will be the elect; and so St. Peter calls *all* the Christians to whom he writes, 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God;' not elect to actual salvation, but to the capacity of it; for all were capable of it, but it was not credible that all would obtain it. Then again, foreknowledge must mean the foreknowledge of

something peculiar to these people; either that there was some aptitude in them themselves for the reception of the Gospel; or that, for the sake of spreading the Gospel with the greater facility and rapidity, it would be expedient to begin with them; or both these circumstances might have existed together; and then we might conceive God disposing things by his providence in such a manner that the Gospel should be preached to them in due season. At all events, you see, we get rid of all notion of God's dealings being irrespective and arbitrary, not only with regard to everlasting salvation, but also with regard to the first calling of any persons to the knowledge of the Gospel.

"If I had time, Mrs. Milton, I would gladly go through all the passages, in which any mention is made of electing or choosing; and perhaps we may find time hereafter, if God so will. But there is one very remarkable text, which I will not now omit. St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, says in the 2d chapter of his 2d Epistle, at the 13th verse, that 'God had chosen them from the beginning to salvation.' Now I have no doubt, that many people, taking this text by itself, would immediately run away with the idea, that here was the very essence of Calvinism. But let them consider, salvation cannot here mean more than the capacity; the

being admitted into a covenant of which salvation was the end. It cannot mean more, because it is spoken of all the Thessalonian Christians; and because, in the very same Epistle, St. Paul prays, 'that God would count them worthy of this election, and that they might glorify the name of Jesus Christ.' See therefore, my good Mrs. Milton, how necessary it is always to look to the context, and to the whole tenour of an Epistle, before you venture to explain a detached passage. St. Paul fears lest the tempter might tempt the Thessalonians, and so make vain the Apostle's labour; he could not therefore consider them immutably appointed to salvation."

Here Mrs. Milton began to be very uneasy, and wished, I believe, to ged rid of me; so, being also very much fatigued myself, I hastened to draw to a conclusion of the whole discussion, which I did in this manner. "There remains now," I said, "to the best of my recollection, but one point more to which I have not yet spoken; I shall be extremely brief upon it indeed. In assuming that particular persons were predestinated to eternal life, you assumed at the same time, that it was only for such that Christ died. No doctrine can be so totally contrary to the Gospel as this of particular redemption, and it shall not pass without my decided reprobation.

I could overwhelm you with texts against it; but two or three very striking ones will be sufficient for any ingenuous mind. St. John says, 'Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world;' and St. Paul says, 'he died for all;' 'he gave himself a ransom for all;' 'he tasted death for every man.'"

"What!" cried Mrs. Milton; "did he die, then, for the reprobates too?" "Yes," I answered, "for the reprobates too; but not for the reprobates in the sense that you understand the word; for there are no such persons; but for those, who will not be able to abide that severe scrutiny into their faith and works, which the great Judge will institute at the last day. Those are the true reprobates, and Christ died for *them*, as well as for the best Christians; but *they* wilfully put away his salvation from them, and trample under foot *him* who bought them with his blood, and bring upon themselves destruction. Thus spoke St. Peter, and St. Paul's language was the same; and therefore the redemption wrought by Christ's death is without limit, and perfectly universal; and the great glory and sweet comfort of this doctrine is, that it utterly overthrows all the tenets of Calvinism, and encourages the poor dejected sinner to cast away despair, and to lift up his head in humble hope

of being able to touch the hem of his Saviour's garment, and thereby to become clean. If he pray, he is assured that he has an Intercessor at God's right hand, who will help his prayers; who died for him, in short, and will therefore plead his merits in his behalf. But with what spirit will *you* pray, Mrs. Milton? If your lot be fixed by an irreversible decree, what is the use of prayer? Prayer cannot alter it.

"But I have now done. Fare you well, Mrs. Milton; and walk, I beseech you, henceforth worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called; with all lowliness and meekness; with long-suffering and forbearance; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." So I left her.

THE END.

Printed by R. Gilbert, St. John's-square, London.


00111419

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 10 February, 2016